



Community based marketing strategies: A case study of a home-based microenterprise in expanding market

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Abstract

This study aims to explain how community participation contributes to the transformation of marketing strategies in Dana Berkah, a home-based batik microenterprise in Tuban. Employing a qualitative single-case study design, the research traces the how and why processes through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and analytical techniques including pattern matching, explanation building, time series analysis, and the logic model. The findings reveal that prior to joining the community, the enterprise experienced marketing isolation, limited visual documentation, restricted market reach, and passive promotional behavior. Participation in the MSME community generated substantial changes through the expansion of promotional channels, intensification of offline marketing activities, wider access to information, and the development of a stronger business identity. The community acted as a change mechanism by providing informal learning, information exchange, and emotional support that enhanced the owner's confidence to adopt proactive marketing practices. These results highlight the role of community-based social capital in strengthening marketing capabilities among resource-constrained microenterprises. The study is limited by its single-case design, reliance on self-reported narratives, and the limited observation timeframe. Practically, the study offers a collaborative learning model applicable to batik microenterprises and other creative-sector MSMEs, and provides valuable insights for policymakers designing network-based empowerment strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

A home-based microenterprise, Dana Berkah in Tuban, illustrates the structural challenges faced by craft-based MSMEs in Indonesia. Its reliance on conventional marketing practices based on personal recommendations limits market reach and hampers the diffusion of product information. This condition reflects the broader situation of traditional MSMEs, which often experience a gap between product quality and their ability to access wider markets (Raya et al., 2021). In the context of the creative industry, limited promotional capacity frequently results in local craft products failing to obtain adequate visibility within the modern economic ecosystem.

These challenges are exacerbated by the absence of business networks prior to joining a community. Operating individually without collective support results in limited access to training, exhibition opportunities, and avenues for developing marketing capabilities. Socio-economic isolation is one of the key factors that undermines MSME competitiveness, particularly in skill-based traditional sectors (Kim, 2021). Limited access to market intelligence, digital practices, and collaborative opportunities further constrains MSMEs from adapting to rapidly changing market dynamics (Do et al., 2025).

In response to these conditions, the owner of Dana Berkah made a strategic decision to join local MSME communities, women's groups, and batik associations. This decision was not merely a reactive response to market needs but also reflected a cognitive evaluation of the community's potential as a source of support, information, and marketing opportunities (Beharrie & Mabitsela, 2023). This approach aligns with prior research emphasizing the importance of examining the how and why mechanisms in understanding strategic actions among small business units (Yamin & Ridwan, 2023). Thus, the decision to join the community can be viewed as a needs-driven strategic response aimed at strengthening the enterprise's marketing capacity (Hamid et al., 2024; Rahayu et al., 2023).

Participation in the community provided access to collective resources that were previously unavailable, such as marketing networks, digital training, and joint promotional activities. A growing body of research affirms that community-based social capital plays a critical role in expanding market access, enhancing innovation, and strengthening enterprise resilience particularly within MSMEs in developing economies (Bosua & Evans, 2024; Muna et al., 2024). Through regular interactions and collaborative learning processes, Dana Berkah gained opportunities to improve product communication, broaden business relationships, and reinforce its competitive positioning (Jamilah & Mardiana, 2024; Lubis et al., 2024; Sugih & Fitriyah, n.d.).

This phenomenon not only reflects the experience of a single microenterprise but also represents a broader pattern within Indonesia's creative MSME ecosystem. Many craft-based MSMEs rely on social networks, women's communities, and industry associations to overcome resource constraints, adapt to technological changes, and capitalize on collaborative opportunities. Community based collaboration has been widely recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing marketing capabilities and expanding market reach in the digital economy era (Novansa & Ali, 2017). Therefore, understanding community dynamics is crucial for examining how traditional MSMEs can transform their marketing practices.

Despite this growing body of research, existing studies still provide limited explanation of how microenterprises actually utilize community based networks to transform their marketing capabilities and why certain community mechanisms become effective for traditional craft sectors. Much of the literature highlights the benefits of social capital in general terms, but lacks empirical insight into the specific learning processes, strategic decisions, and capability building pathways experienced by individual microenterprises. What remains unclear is the micro-level mechanism through which community participation reshapes marketing behavior in resource-constrained creative MSMEs.

The case of Dana Berkah becomes important because it offers a concrete illustration of these mechanisms. It provides insight into the decision-making process behind joining communities, the types of support that actually generate capability shifts, and the ways collaborative environments help traditional batik microenterprises overcome marketing barriers. By examining this case, the study fills a gap in the literature by showing how community-driven learning and networking operate at the micro level, offering empirical depth that complements the predominantly conceptual discussions found in previous research

Building on this context, the examination of Dana Berkah's experience provides valuable theoretical contributions to the study of social capital, business networking, and community-based marketing (Minarni, 2024; Nasution et al., 2020; Rizqiya et al., 2022). Practically, this research offers a collaborative learning model that can be adapted by batik microenterprises and other creative-sector MSMEs. Such insights are essential for policymakers, support institutions, and MSME communities seeking to develop network based empowerment strategies that promote the sustainability of small enterprises.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a single case study design that focuses exclusively on MSMEs Dana Berkah as the sole unit of analysis. The approach refers to (Yin, 2018) methodological framework to trace the *how* and *why* processes within a realistic and naturally occurring business context. An interpretivist constructivist paradigm is adopted to understand how the owner of Dana Berkah interprets her experiences, decision-making processes, and the development of marketing practices within the enterprise. The research was conducted in Padasan Village, Kerek District, Tuban, with the owner of Dana Berkah serving as the primary informant. All data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observations of daily marketing activities and business interactions. Data collection was conducted through one in-depth interview lasting approximately three hours, recorded using a mobile phone audio recorder and later transcribed into text with the assistance of AI-based transcription tools.

Data analysis follows techniques recommended by (Yin, 2018), including pattern matching, explanation building, time series analysis, and the logic model. Pattern matching is used to compare the owner's decision-making patterns with relevant theoretical constructs. Explanation building is applied to develop a step-by-step understanding of the relationship between decisions, community interaction processes, and changes in marketing practices. Time series analysis is conducted to chronologically compare the evolution of marketing strategies before and after the owner joined the community. Meanwhile, the logic model is employed to map the systematic relationship between inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes, allowing the mechanisms of change within the enterprise to be explained in a structured manner. Observations were conducted over a period of three weeks through multiple unstructured observation sessions that focused on daily marketing activities, customer interactions, and participation in community-driven promotional practices.

The analytical techniques were implemented manually. Coding procedures were carried out in three stages: (1) initial open coding to identify meaningful segments of the interview and observation data, (2) axial coding to connect categories related to decision-making, community participation, and marketing transformation, and (3) selective coding to refine core themes. Pattern identification was conducted by comparing emerging categories with theoretical propositions, while themes were developed by grouping recurring concepts that explained shifts in marketing capability, behavioral change, and learning processes triggered by community engagement.

Research validity is ensured through construct validity by implementing source triangulation and establishing a clear chain of evidence to maintain transparency in data tracing.

Internal validity is achieved by examining rival explanations to ensure that alternative interpretations of the findings are critically evaluated. External validity is established through analytic generalization, which links the findings to broader theoretical concepts without relying on statistical generalization. Reliability is maintained by developing a case study protocol and documenting all data in a case study database, ensuring that the research procedures can be replicated by other scholars.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Addressing the Need to Overcome Marketing Limitations

The analysis shows that the owner's decision to join the MSME community stemmed from a deep awareness of the limitations of her existing marketing strategies, which were highly localized, passive, and heavily dependent on personal networks (Nagel et al., 2024; Putiamini et al., 2022). The business relied primarily on nearby residents, close relatives, and word-of-mouth recommendations. When there were no social activities happening in the surrounding neighborhood, sales tended to stagnate.

“Previously, I relied only on neighbors or acquaintances. If no one happened to pass by or ask about the products, then sales simply did not move.” (Owner of Dana Berkah)

These findings indicate a situational awareness that localized marketing is unsustainable and unable to expand market reach. Pattern matching with network theory suggests that such marketing isolation is a common trigger for MSMEs to seek broader forms of connectedness (Amaliyah & Hetika, 2024; Basar et al., 2024; Marini et al., 2024). Field observations further support this finding. Prior to joining the community, Dana Berkah had no digital catalog, no standardized product documentation, and no consistent marketing communication channels. Product photos were taken spontaneously using a mobile phone, often without adequate lighting, and were not stored in an organized format. No digital promotional media or active social media accounts were identified. Observations also revealed the absence of proactive marketing activities, such as participating in bazaars, attending MSME gatherings, or distributing product information beyond the village area. Marketing activities were reactive and occurred only when incoming orders happened to arrive.

“I mainly focus on making the batik crafts. As for selling, I only work on orders when they come in. I never really thought about posting photos or joining events.” (Owner of Dana Berkah)

This condition reflects the resource constraints and capability gaps commonly experienced by home-based craft MSMEs. Such circumstances created an urgent need for the owner to seek learning spaces, support mechanisms, and broader access to information, which ultimately led her to join the MSME community as a strategic solution.

Perceived Benefits of Community Networking

The findings indicate that the owner of Dana Berkah perceives the community as a strategic space for gaining information, marketing opportunities, and business relationships that would be difficult to access independently. The decision to join emerged after observing that other community members were more frequently involved in bazaars, exhibitions, and training programs that provided wider market access. The owner acknowledged that the community offered a faster and more structured flow of information compared to seeking opportunities individually

“I saw that other community members often joined bazaars. That made me think that if I joined the community, I might have the same opportunity.” (Owner of Dana Berkah)

Field observations support this finding, showing that community members routinely exchange information about exhibition schedules, training opportunities, and potential collaborations during their regular interactions. Theoretically, this aligns with patterns in social capital theory, in which the decision to join a community is driven by the need to integrate into networks that provide broader informational capital and opportunity access.

Informal Learning and Peer Support

The findings reveal that the community functions as a learning space that provides informal and organically developed marketing knowledge. Learning does not occur through structured formal training but rather emerges naturally through everyday interactions among members. The owner of Dana Berkah explained that many of the promotional strategies she now applies were acquired through spontaneous conversations, group discussions, and peer-sharing activities within the community.

“I learned how to take product photos not from a formal training, but from another MSME member who taught me during our gatherings.” (Owner of Dana Berkah)

Field observations show that this learning process takes place in highly natural settings. During community meet-ups, members often demonstrate simple but practical techniques such as adjusting lighting for product photos, using plain backgrounds, or editing images through easy-to-use mobile applications. At other times, members help each other create simple digital posters using free design templates. These interactions illustrate a mechanism of *peer-to-peer learning*, which accelerates the transfer of practical knowledge without requiring formal training structures. Beyond technical skills, the community also plays an important role in providing emotional support. The owner shared that she initially lacked confidence to join bazaars or participate in public events. However, encouragement and reassurance from other members helped reduce her self-doubt and gradually strengthened her confidence.

“I used to feel insecure about joining bazaars, like I wasn’t ready. But after getting so much support from community friends, I finally dared to try.” (Owner of Dana Berkah)

Observations further indicate that this support extends beyond verbal encouragement. Members actively assist one another in preparing for exhibitions helping arrange products, set prices, design simple labels, and offering tips on communicating with visitors. During joint exhibitions, members also direct customers to each other’s booths, demonstrating a strong sense of solidarity that enhances members’ confidence in engaging with the public. Theoretically, these dynamics align with the concept of *bonding social capital*, where close-knit social relationships create a safe and supportive environment for learning, experimenting, and developing new skills. Informal learning and peer support thus act as crucial catalysts for home-based microenterprises like Dana Berkah to develop marketing capabilities that were previously absent.

Condition Before Joining the Community

Before joining the MSMES community, Dana Berkah’s marketing activities were minimal and highly unstructured. Promotional efforts relied entirely on word-of-mouth

recommendations without any additional marketing channels. Most customers came from the immediate social circle neighbors, family members, returning buyers, and individuals who happened to learn about the business through informal conversations in the neighborhood. When there were no social activities such as community gatherings or family visits, sales dropped significantly, showing that business continuity depended heavily on local social dynamics rather than intentional marketing strategies.

Limited visual documentation worsened the situation. The owner did not have a product catalog, either physical or digital. Product photos were rarely taken and were generally low quality captured using a mobile phone without proper lighting, without a consistent background, and without proper product styling. As a result, the owner struggled to meet requests from potential buyers outside the area who needed visual references before making a purchase decision. This lack of documentation not only hampered promotion efforts but also diminished the perceived professionalism of the batik products.

Interview results confirmed that the owner's primary focus was on the batik production process. This production-centered mindset often pushed marketing aspects aside. There was no official price list, no motif catalog, and no organized record-keeping system for customer orders. The owner also did not participate regularly in MSMEs bazaars or exhibitions due to limited knowledge about event schedules and unfamiliarity with the registration procedures.

The owner's digital literacy was also at a basic level. They were unfamiliar with digital marketing concepts, including using WhatsApp Catalog, social media, or creating simple digital promotional posters. This lack of knowledge meant the business had no presence in the digital space, even though digitalization has become a crucial channel for MSMEs to expand market reach today. This pre-community condition illustrates a situation of marketing isolation commonly observed in home-based micro-enterprises: businesses operating with limited access to information, minimal networking opportunities, and no use of marketing technologies that enable market expansion. This isolation created dependence on a narrow local market and made it difficult for the business to adapt to broader demand dynamics.

Condition After Joining the Community

The owner's participation in the MSMEs community brought significant changes to the marketing patterns and business behavior of Dana Berkah. A time-series analysis shows a gradual yet consistent shift from passive, socially driven marketing toward a more proactive, structured, and market-oriented approach. These changes are evident across three key dimensions: (1) the expansion of promotional channels, (2) the intensification of offline marketing activities, and (3) the broadened access to information and business opportunities.

1) Promotional Channels

After joining the community, the owner began adopting several promotional channels that were previously unused. The use of WhatsApp Catalog became an important first step, allowing the owner to organize product lists systematically, complete with photos, sizes, motif variations, and prices. This feature made it easier for customers outside the village to access the catalog without requesting individual photos and enhanced the professionalism of business communication. In addition, the owner started creating digital posters for promotional purposes. With assistance from other community members, she learned to use simple design applications based on free templates. These posters were used to announce participation in exhibitions, offer discounts, or introduce new collections. The routine use of digital posters helped increase product visibility in the digital space.

The owner also improved the quality of product photos, an essential element in batik marketing. She learned basic product photography techniques such as using natural lighting, choosing a clean background, and capturing multiple angles to highlight the motifs. Cleaner and

more consistent photos made the products appear more professional, increased perceived value, and facilitated visual distribution through WhatsApp groups or the community's social media channels.

2) Offline Marketing Activities

The second dimension is the increased involvement of the owner in offline marketing activities. The community became a primary source of information about the schedule of bazaars, exhibitions, and other MSMEs events, allowing the owner to participate more regularly and strategically. The owner began actively participating in MSMEs exhibitions at the village and subdistrict levels activities she had not engaged in consistently before. In these events, she learned how to arrange product displays, set prices, explain the uniqueness of motifs to visitors, and improve customer interaction. Regular participation in exhibitions helped introduce Dana Berkah's products to a wider audience and increased business visibility.

The owner also joined collaborative MSMEs events such as thematic bazaars or collective booths. These collaborative activities allowed her to "ride the exposure" of more established MSMEs, expand cross-community networks, and open new promotional collaboration opportunities. Joint activities also created positive psychological effects, boosting the owner's confidence when interacting with customers and presenting her products.

"By joining the community, I get bazaar information faster and often get invited to join others"

3) Customer Reach

The third dimension is the increased access to information and business opportunities that were previously difficult to obtain. After joining the community, the owner received information more quickly, systematically, and relevant to the business's development needs. The owner regularly obtained information about digital marketing training such as product photography, simple copywriting, and the use of design applications. Access to this training provided capacity-building benefits that could be immediately applied in daily operations.

She also frequently received invitations to join exhibitions organized by the village/subdistrict government, related agencies, or empowerment organizations. This information was typically shared through the community group and was rarely accessible to MSMEs outside the network. The community also provided opportunities for collaboration with other MSMEs, such as product bundling, hampers partnerships, and various joint promotional programs. These collaborations expanded the market reach and allowed the owner to learn marketing strategies from more experienced MSMEs. Additionally, the owner received recommendations about affordable and reliable raw material suppliers, helping reduce production costs and increase profit margins. Community members also shared insights on consumer demand trends, such as popular batik motifs, trending color combinations, and market reference prices.

Impact of the Community on the Transformation of Marketing Strategy

The impact of the community on transforming Dana Berkah's marketing strategy is evident in the gradual yet fundamental shift in how the business promotes and positions its products (Bire et al., 2023; Prasetyo & Mustaqim, 2024; Yildiz et al., 2024). The community functions as a true "change mechanism," encouraging the owner to move from passive marketing behavior toward becoming a more confident, connected, and strategy-aware entrepreneur (Lee et al., 2024). One of the most visible outcomes is the increased product visibility. Previously known only within the immediate neighborhood, Dana Berkah's batik

products began to appear regularly at subdistrict-level events and were invited several times to village government programs. This presence in public spaces not only expanded exposure but also strengthened the business's recognition as an established local MSMEs.

The community also played a significant role in diversifying marketing strategies. The owner no longer relied on a single promotional approach but started combining multiple channels: offline promotions through bazaars and exhibitions, simple digital promotions using posters and improved product photos, and network-based promotions supported by recommendations from fellow MSMEs members (Pariyanti et al., 2024). This multi-layered strategy created a reinforcing effect offline events attracted new audiences, digital content maintained consumer interest, and network recommendations boosted credibility. Another key impact is the emergence of a clearer business identity.

Field observations show improvements in communication style and product presentation: the owner began creating simple labels, arranging batik photos more neatly, and presenting clearer product narratives when speaking with bazaar visitors. These narratives not only explained motifs and prices but also conveyed the meaning and uniqueness of each batik piece. Such improvements helped shape a more professional brand image and distinguished Dana Berkah from other home-based batik producers lacking visual or narrative identity. At a deeper level, the community encouraged a shift in the owner's marketing mindset.

| “Now I dare to look for opportunities myself, not wait for others to ask,”

The owner actively searches for bazaar opportunities, offers to join events, and thinks strategically about how to make the products more visible. This proactive mindset is a crucial outcome of community-based learning, showing that the community not only provides information access but also builds confidence, initiative, and awareness that marketing is a strategic activity requiring deliberate planning, not merely a byproduct of production.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that community participation serves as a powerful catalyst for transforming the marketing strategy of Dana Berkah, a home-based batik microenterprise in Tuban. Prior to joining the MSME community, the enterprise was characterized by marketing isolation, limited visual documentation, narrow customer reach, and passive promotional behavior. The decision to join the community was driven by a recognition of these marketing constraints and the need for wider access to information, networks, and learning opportunities. Through community engagement, the owner experienced substantial improvements across promotional channels, offline marketing activities, and customer reach. The community provided not only technical knowledge such as product photography, and catalog development but also emotional support that enhanced confidence and willingness to seek new opportunities. Ultimately, the transformation is reflected in increased product visibility, diversification of marketing strategies, stronger business identity, and a shift toward proactive marketing behavior. These findings affirm the central role of community-based social capital in enabling microenterprises to overcome resource limitations, enhance market readiness, and build sustainable marketing capabilities.

Future research should explore how different types of communities, such as digital communities and women-led groups, contribute to capability development among microenterprises. Comparative studies across regions or craft sectors in Indonesia may also provide deeper insights into contextual factors that influence the success of community-based empowerment. In addition, further examination is needed to understand how community

participation shapes long-term business resilience, innovation trajectories, and digital transformation among traditional MSMEs.

Limitations

This study has several important limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the use of a single-case study design focusing solely on the Dana Berkah microenterprise limits the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts of craft-based MSMEs in other regions. Second, the data relied heavily on interviews with the business owner, which may contain subjective bias or selective recall, although field observations were conducted to strengthen the validity of the findings. Third, the limited observation period means that the *time series* analysis captures only the early stages of change after the owner joined the community, making it difficult to confirm the long-term sustainability of these impacts. These limitations provide a foundation for future research to expand the context, include more stakeholders, and further test the findings to achieve stronger and more generalizable empirical results.

Implications

This study contributes to the literature on social capital, community-based learning, and MSME marketing innovation by demonstrating how informal networks serve as a mechanism for transforming marketing behavior in resource-constrained settings. The findings reinforce the relevance of explanation-building and network theory in understanding how microenterprises evolve through social interactions rather than formal training systems. The transformation of marketing mindset observed in Dana Berkah offers empirical grounding for the concept of community-driven capability development in traditional sectors.

The research highlights the importance of strengthening MSME communities as platforms for collaborative learning and marketing empowerment. Policymakers and local government agencies can use these insights to design programs that encourage cross-MSMEs collaboration, joint exhibitions, peer mentoring, and accessible digital training. Community organizers can also adopt structured mechanisms such as shared product catalogs, group-based promotional initiatives, or collective branding to amplify the visibility of member enterprises.

For microentrepreneurs, the study illustrates that joining a community can significantly expand marketing capacity with minimal financial cost. Engaging in peer learning, leveraging community networks, and adopting basic digital tools can lead to meaningful improvements in product presentation, confidence, and market exposure

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