IMPACTIA

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Business Development Strategies for Small-Scale Street Food Enterprises in Enhancing Market Competitiveness

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Abstract: This community engagement initiative aims to enhance the market competitiveness and operational sustainability of small-scale street food enterprises operating near campus environments in South Jakarta. Small culinary businesses play a vital role in sustaining the local economy; however, traditional vendors frequently encounter critical operational bottlenecks, including limited financial literacy, reliance on conventional sales channels, inadequate product packaging, and a lack of digital marketing strategies. To address these barriers, a participatory direct-mentoring framework was executed through a structured process comprising baseline field observation, diagnostic needs identification via in-depth interviews, SWOT and 4P Marketing Mix strategic analysis, and targeted intervention. The mentorship focused on empowering business owners by introducing eco-friendly branded packaging, implementing structured daily financial bookkeeping, diversifying product offerings, and activating social media marketing channels. The results demonstrate that hands-on assistance significantly enhanced the partner's strategic understanding of brand identity, improved product hygiene standards, and optimized cash flow transparency. Furthermore, transitioning from sole reliance on conventional street-side transactions to active digital promotion expanded market accessibility and strengthened brand equity among university consumers. Overall, this initiative highlights the essential role of university-led community engagement in bridging academic expertise with grassroots economic needs, fostering long-term business resilience, and elevating the market position of small culinary enterprises.

Keywords: Business development, Culinary MSMEs, Market competitiveness, Marketing mix, Product packaging, Street food enterprises

Citation: Andhika Fadillah, Ariel Mei Vander Sitohang, Brigitha Maranresy, Bunga Dalilah Salsabilah, Farel Akbar Al Habsy, Fileno Agustafa, Kharisma Ramadani, Radzwill Althaf, Reza Suriansha,Wanudhyaria Hamarto,Endah Dwi Rossanti,Erwin Rasyid,Lidia Puspasari. Business Development Strategies for Small-Scale Street Food Enterprises in Enhancing Market Competitiveness. *IMPACTIA* **2024**, *1*, 0. https://doi.org/

Received:
Accepted:
Published:

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) represent the foundational backbone of national economic resilience and socio-economic mobility, particularly within emerging markets. In Indonesia, the informal culinary sector accounts for a substantial proportion of micro-enterprises, absorbing a significant share of the informal workforce and providing accessible, low-cost nutritional solutions to diverse urban demographics. Within urban educational hubs, the concentration of higher education institutions creates high-density micro-economies populated primarily by university students, academic staff, and local residents. These localized markets foster an exceptionally high demand for ready-to-eat, affordable, and practical convenience foods, commonly exemplified by traditional street food vendors (*usaha gorengan*). Vendors selling fried snacks—such as crispy fritters (*bakwan*), stuffed tofu (*tahu isi*), fried tempeh (*tempe goreng*), and banana fritters (*pisang goreng*)—serve as vital economic agents within these campus ecosystems, offering daily consumer products characterized by affordability, rapid service, and broad consumer preference.

Despite their economic vitality and widespread market acceptance, small-scale street food enterprises operating near academic institutions face severe operational vulnerabilities and structural bottlenecks that hinder long-term growth and competitiveness. Operating predominantly within informal or semi-formal street-side frameworks, these micro-enterprises heavily rely on traditional, reactive business practices. A primary challenge stems from intense market saturation; because entry barriers into the street-food sector are remarkably low, a high density of homogeneous vendors competes for the same localized consumer base. This overcrowding leads to severe price wars and margin compression, as vendors rarely possess the strategic tools to differentiate their product offerings. Furthermore, traditional operators often neglect fundamental aspects of modern commercialization, including product hygiene standards, aesthetic packaging, systematic brand identity, and structured operational workflows. Consequently, despite generating high transactional volumes during peak business hours, these micro-enterprises remain trapped in a cycle of economic stagnation and low perceived value.

The lack of formal management practices and digital integration further amplifies the strategic weakness of traditional street food vendors. In terms of financial administration, a vast majority of micro-vendors operate without separate business-and-personal accounting practices. The absence of systematic daily bookkeeping prevents business owners from accurately calculating true variable and fixed cost structures, determining precise net operating margins, or evaluating capital depreciation. Simultaneously, while contemporary consumer behavior—particularly among tech-savvy university students—has shifted dramatically toward digital platforms, social media discovery, and online delivery ecosystems, small street food vendors remain digitally excluded. This digital divide restricts their operational footprint exclusively to immediate foot-traffic boundaries, rendering them highly vulnerable to localized disruptions, seasonal academic holidays, and fluctuating raw material supply chains.

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Figure 1. Baseline field observation and initial interaction with the street food vendor partner (*Abang Aldi*) and the community engagement team at Cilandak Barat, South Jakarta.

In response to these pervasive operational deficits, community engagement programs led by higher education institutions play a pivotal role in bridging academic management models with grassroots business needs. University-led intervention serves as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation by introducing structured managerial frameworks—such as the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) diagnostic matrix and the 4P Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) strategy—into informal business operations. Prior empirical literature emphasizes that empowering micro-enterprises requires a transition from passive financial assistance to active, participatory mentorship that fosters self-reliance, digital literacy, and sustainable operational habits. When applied to street food vendors, strategic interventions must balance the retention of low price points with the integration of value-added innovations, including hygienic eco-friendly packaging, menu diversification, branded identity development, and basic digital marketing.

To examine and address these real-world challenges, a university-led community engagement project (*Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat* - PKM) was executed in collaboration with a representative street food micro-enterprise (*Gorengan Abang Aldi*) situated on Jalan

Batong Raya, Cilandak Barat, South Jakarta. Operating continuously since 2010, this partner enterprise demonstrates remarkable operational resilience, achieving an average daily gross turnover (*omzet*) of IDR 4,000,000 through the high-volume sale of fried snacks priced at IDR 2,000 per unit. However, despite sixteen years of commercial stability and strong local consumer traction, the vendor exhibited critical vulnerabilities, including complete reliance on conventional plastic packaging, lack of formal financial record-keeping, absent digital visibility, and vulnerability to raw material price volatility.

This paper presents the empirical implementation and strategic outcomes of a structured community engagement model designed to elevate the market competitiveness and operational sustainability of small-scale street food enterprises. By combining baseline observational mapping, in-depth diagnostic interviews, and participatory direct-mentoring, this initiative aimed to:

1. Deconstruct the internal financial structure and operational mechanics of an established campus-based street food vendor;
2. Formulate an actionable business development strategy grounded in SWOT diagnostic mapping and the 4P Marketing Mix framework; and
3. Implement hands-on interventions focusing on eco-friendly branded packaging, digital promotion activation, menu innovation, and structured financial bookkeeping.

By documenting the systematic transformation of an informal street food cart into a modern, digitally visible, and structured micro-enterprise, this study contributes practical insights into urban micro-entrepreneurship, university-community synergy, and sustainable informal economic development within emerging academic markets.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Site, Partner Profile, and Execution Timeline

This community engagement and empirical research project was conducted in collaboration with a representative micro-scale street food vendor (*UMKM Gorengan Abang Aldi*) situated on Jalan Batong Raya, Cilandak Barat, Cilandak District, South Jakarta, Special Capital Region of Jakarta. The geographical positioning of this micro-enterprise is highly strategic, operating within a dense urban corridor directly adjacent to higher education campuses, student residential complexes, and secondary schools. This environment creates a consistent, high-volume consumer flow dominated by university students, academic staff, and local daily commuters.

The partner micro-enterprise has demonstrated exceptional operational durability, having operated continuously since 2010 (spanning over 16 years of commercial activity). The enterprise specializes in traditional Indonesian fried snacks (*gorengan*), including crispy vegetable fritters (*bakwan*), stuffed tofu (*tahu isi*), fried tempeh (*tempe goreng*), banana fritters (*pisang goreng*), and rice cakes wrapped in banana leaves (*lontong*). Despite maintaining a solid customer base and achieving a substantial average daily gross turnover (*omzet*) of approximately IDR 4,000,000 at a unit price of IDR 2,000, the enterprise operated entirely through traditional street-side setups without digital integration, formal financial records, or systematic brand identity prior to this intervention.

The field intervention, data collection, and direct-mentoring activities were systematically executed over a one-month duration from May to June 2026. The structured timeline and key milestones of the community engagement program are detailed in Table 1.

2.2. Research Design and Participatory Mentoring Framework

To address both the empirical research objectives and the practical community empowerment goals, this study utilized a participatory qualitative descriptive research design combined with a hands-on mentoring framework. Rather than acting merely as external observers, the university project team engaged directly with the business owner as active facilitators. This participatory approach ensured that all strategic interventions were mutually agreed upon, culturally appropriate, and aligned with the operational capacity of the partner.

Table 1. Implementation Timeline and Key Operational Milestones (May–June 2026)

Phase / Stage	Timeframe	Key Activities and Deliverables
Phase 1: Baseline Field Observation	Week 1 (May 2026)	Unobtrusive observation of daily sales transactions, peak traffic times, food handling hygiene, and conventional packaging methods.
Phase 2: Diagnostic Interviewing	Week 2 (May 2026)	In-depth structured interviews with the business owner (*Abang Aldi*) regarding financial parameters, supply chain, and operational constraints.
Phase 3: Strategic Formulation	Week 3 (June 2026)	Data transcription, financial cost-structure modeling, SWOT diagnostic mapping, and 4P Marketing Mix formulation.
Phase 4: Intervention & Mentoring	Week 4 (June 2026)	Implementation of eco-friendly branded packaging, setup of financial bookkeeping templates, and activation of digital marketing accounts.

The overall operational workflow of the project was structured into three major sequential phases:

1. **Preparation and Baseline Field Observation Phase:** Prior to direct dialogue, the project team conducted unobtrusive baseline observations at the vending cart location. This phase focused on documenting the physical layout, customer interaction dynamics, queuing patterns during morning and afternoon peak hours, sanitary standards of food display, and the usage of conventional single-use plastic bags.
2. **In-Depth Diagnostic Interviewing Phase:** Face-to-face qualitative interviews were conducted at the business site using a pre-tested, semi-structured interview protocol. The qualitative inquiries targeted three fundamental business dimensions:
   - *Financial Dimension:* Daily capital outlay, unit raw material expenses, daily sales volume per product category, unit selling price, and net daily operational profit fluctuation.
   - *Marketing Dimension:* Geographic customer radius, current promotion channels, reliance on word-of-mouth, and perceived barriers to adopting digital platforms.
   - *Operational & Supply Chain Dimension:* Sourcing mechanisms for raw materials (cooking oil, wheat flour, vegetables, soy-based products), daily inventory turnover, waste management, and raw material price volatility.
3. **Data Analysis, Strategy Formulation, and Execution Phase:** Qualitative data from audio recordings and field notes were transcribed and analyzed. Strategic formulation was executed using analytical management tools, specifically the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Matrix and the 4P Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) framework.

2.3. Analytical Frameworks: SWOT Matrix and 4P Marketing Mix

To translate raw qualitative field data into structured strategic actions, two core managerial tools were applied:

2.3.1. SWOT Diagnostic Matrix

The SWOT Matrix was constructed to systematically map the partner's internal capabilities and external market environmental factors:

- **Strengths (S):** Internal operational competencies, product quality, historical stability, and competitive pricing.
- **Weaknesses (W):** Internal managerial deficits, lack of financial separation, informal branding, and digital illiteracy.

- **Opportunities (O):** External market prospects, dense student consumer base, expanding digital food ordering trends, and sustainable packaging demand.
- **Threats (T):** External environmental risks, raw material cost inflation, rising local competition, and weather-dependent foot traffic.

2.3.2. 4P Marketing Mix Framework

Following the internal-external diagnostic, the classic 4P Marketing Mix model [4] was used to operationalize the strategic recommendations:

- **Product Strategy:** Upgrading the core product offering through recipe refinement, flavor toppings, and hygienic handling.
- **Price Strategy:** Maintaining the accessible baseline price point (IDR 2,000/unit) while establishing bundled menu pricing to increase average transaction values.
- **Place Strategy:** Optimizing the physical street-cart display while preparing digital gateway integration for online delivery services.
- **Promotion Strategy:** Transitioning from passive local presence to active visual digital marketing (Instagram/TikTok) and eco-friendly branded packaging.

2.4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Impact Evaluation Metrics

The success and impact of the community engagement intervention were quantitatively and qualitatively measured using a structured evaluation matrix. The specific indicators evaluated before and after the project implementation are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Evaluating Program Outcomes

Evaluation Indicator	Pre-Intervention Baseline	Targeted Post-Intervention State
Financial Transparency	Zero formal record-keeping; personal and business cash mixed.	Daily digital/ledger cash flow recording; separated profit margins.
Product Packaging	Unbranded single-use thin plastic bags; poor heat retention.	Eco-friendly paper bags with custom brand logo and contact details.
Digital Presence	Complete absence on social media or search platforms.	Active business profile on Instagram/TikTok with digital menu.
Product Differentiation	Standard conventional menu offerings.	Menu innovation with modern flavor variations and toppings.
Brand Perception	Generic street food cart without clear brand identity.	Established brand identity (*Gorengan Abang Aldi*) with higher value.

2.5. Ethical Considerations and Data Validation

To maintain rigorous ethical standards, informed consent was obtained verbally from the business owner prior to conducting interviews and photo documentation. Data validation was achieved through methodological triangulation, cross-verifying interview responses with direct observational sales counts and supplier purchase receipts collected during the field assessment period.

3. Results

3.1. Partner Profile and Baseline Operational Characteristics

The empirical investigation began with a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation of the partner micro-enterprise, *UMKM Gorengan Abang Aldi*, located on Jalan Batong Raya, Cilandak Barat, South Jakarta. The business owner, Mr. Aldi (*Abang Aldi*), has demonstrated remarkable business stability, actively operating this culinary micro-enterprise for over 16 years since its establishment in 2010. The strategic selection of fried snack (*gorengan*) retailing was driven by an initial market assessment identifying fried snacks as a ubiquitous, highly stable, and high-demand convenience food within urban Indonesian food cultures, particularly among student populations.

Prior to the community engagement intervention, the partner operated on a conventional street-cart framework. The daily operational workflow, cost structures, and revenue metrics collected during the May–June 2026 field assessment are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Baseline Financial Profile and Operational Parameters of Partner MSME

Operational Parameter	**Empirical Baseline Data / Value**
Business Owner	Mr. Aldi (*Abang Aldi*)
Year of Establishment	2010 (>16 years of continuous operation)
Primary Location	Jalan Batong Raya, Cilandak Barat, South Jakarta
Core Product Portfolio	Crispy Fritters (*Bakwan*), Stuffed Tofu (*Tahu Isi*), Fried Tempeh (*Tempe Goreng*), Banana Fritters (*Pisang Goreng*), Rice Cakes (*Lontong*)
Best-Selling Menu Items	Crispy Fritters (*Bakwan*), Fried Tempeh (*Tempe*), Stuffed Tofu (*Risol/Tofu*)
Unit Selling Price	IDR 2,000 per piece (snack items); IDR 2,000 per piece (*Lontong*)
Daily Gross Revenue (*Omzet*)	Average IDR 4,000,000 per day
Daily Production Volume	Approximately 2,000 individual units per day
Raw Material Supply Chain	Direct daily procurement from local traditional markets (*Pasar Tradisional*)
Primary Consumer Base	University students, school students, local workers, and neighborhood residents
Marketing	100% conventional foot-traffic and word-of-mouth (Zero digital presence)
Packaging	Thin, unbranded, transparent single-use plastic bags
Financial Accounting	Unstructured cash management; no separation of personal and business funds

As reflected in Table 3, the enterprise achieves a high daily transactional volume, generating an average daily gross revenue (*omzet*) of IDR 4,000,000 by selling approximately 2,000 units of fried snacks daily at a retail price of IDR 2,000 per unit. The supply chain relies entirely on raw materials (cooking oil, wheat flour, fresh vegetables, tofu, tempeh, and bananas) sourced daily from local traditional markets to guarantee freshness and minimize inventory holding costs. However, despite high sales turnover, the enterprise suffered from structural managerial deficiencies: complete absence of digital branding, total reliance on single-use plastic packaging, lack of formal financial record-keeping, and high exposure to raw material price fluctuations.

3.2. SWOT Diagnostic Analysis

To systematically evaluate the internal capabilities and external market dynamics of *UMKM Gorengan Abang Aldi*, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) diagnostic matrix was constructed based on field observations and qualitative in-depth interviews. The diagnostic synthesis is structured in Table 4.

The SWOT diagnostic revealed that while the business possesses formidable internal strengths in operational experience, high sales volume, and prime physical placement, its primary vulnerabilities reside in internal managerial weaknesses—specifically the absence of digital branding and informal financial habits. The identified opportunities provided a clear imperative for intervention, demonstrating that introducing digital marketing and eco-friendly branded packaging could effectively mitigate external competitive threats.

3.3. Formulation and Implementation of 4P Marketing Mix Strategy

To address the weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis, the project team formulated and executed a tailored 4P Marketing Mix strategy. This strategic framework translated theoretical marketing principles into actionable, low-cost operational interventions suited for a micro-enterprise:

Table 4. SWOT Diagnostic Matrix for Campus-Based Culinary MSME

Internal Strengths (S)	**Internal Weaknesses (W)**
1. Strong operational tenure (>16 years) with mature technical production skills. 2. High daily gross revenue (IDR 4,000,000/day) indicating strong product-market fit. 3. Highly competitive and affordable pricing (IDR 2,000/unit). 4. Prime, high-density location on Jalan Batong Raya adjacent to campus zones. 5. Fresh daily raw material sourcing from local traditional markets.	1. Complete lack of digital marketing and social media presence. 2. Absence of formal financial record-keeping and cash flow separation. 3. Reliance on unbranded, non-eco-friendly single-use plastic packaging. 4. Lack of product differentiation or modern topping variations. 5. Sole dependence on street-side physical foot traffic.
External Opportunities (O)	**External Threats (T)**
1. Massive and recurring consumer demand from surrounding student populations. 2. Growing consumer preference for eco-friendly, hygienic food packaging. 3. High potential for market expansion via online delivery services (GoFood/GrabFood). 4. Social media viral marketing potential via TikTok and Instagram reels. 5. Collaborative opportunities with academic institutions for business assistance.	1. High density of local competitors offering identical food items. 2. Volatility and inflation of essential raw material prices (cooking oil, flour). 3. Sensitivity of street-side sales to adverse weather conditions (rainy seasons). 4. Low consumer switching costs in the street food market segment. 5. Initial vendor apathy toward brand identity and digital tool adoption.

3.3.1. Product Strategy

The intervention focused on enhancing both product value and food safety without altering the core authentic taste that customers favored:

- *Menu Diversification:* Introduction of modern flavor variations and toppings for best-selling items (crispy fritters, stuffed tofu, and risol) to appeal to younger university student demographics.
- *Hygiene and Food Safety Enhancement:* Upgrading food handling procedures at the cart level, including the utilization of stainless-steel display trays, dedicated food tongs, and covered food display cases to shield fried items from street dust and vehicle exhaust.

3.3.2. Price Strategy

- *Baseline Price Preservation:* The core single-unit price was maintained at IDR 2,000 per piece to preserve price sensitivity advantages and retain the primary student customer base.
- *Bundled Value Packages:* Formulation of value-bundle pricing (e.g., 4 pieces for IDR 8,000 in custom packaging) to increase average transaction values per customer and streamline peak-hour cash transactions.

3.3.3. Place Strategy

- *Physical Outlet Modernization:* Re-organizing the physical layout of the street cart on Jalan Batong Raya to improve visual appeal, customer queue flow, and hygiene perception.
- *Digital Gateway Preparation:* Structuring the vendor's product catalog and location tagging to prepare the enterprise for eventual integration into online food delivery platforms (GoFood/GrabFood/ShopeeFood).

3.3.4. Promotion Strategy

- *Branded Eco-Friendly Packaging:* Transitioning from unbranded thin plastic bags to customized eco-friendly paper packaging featuring a distinct business logo, brand identity (*Gorengan Abang Aldi*), and contact information.
- *Digital Social Media Activation:* Creation and setup of official business profiles on Instagram and TikTok, utilizing short-form visual content highlighting crispiness, fresh daily preparation, and hygienic processing.

3.4. Community Engagement Deliverables and Program Outputs

The tangible outcomes produced through the university-led intervention are systematically outlined in Table 5, detailing the specific intervention types, realization descriptions, and measured operational impacts on the partner MSME.

Table 5. Realisations and Operational Impact Matrix of Community Engagement Deliverables

No.	Deliverable Type	Realisations Description	Operational Impact on Partner
1	Innovative Culinary Products	Development and trial of best-selling menu items (*bakwan, tempe, risol*) with modern flavor options and toppings.	Enhanced product attractiveness, increased repeat purchases, and expanded appeal to university students.
2	Eco-Friendly Packaging & Branding	Replacement of thin plastic bags with custom eco-friendly paper bags featuring a dedicated brand logo.	Elevated perceived product value, reinforced food hygiene, and established local brand recognition.
3	Digital Marketing Media	Creation and activation of business social media accounts (Instagram/TikTok) for visual promotion.	Expanded market reach across campus boundaries without increasing daily promotional costs.
4	Business Management Services	Implementation of simple daily cash flow ledger templates to separate business and personal funds.	Provided clear daily profit visibility, structured expense tracking, and facilitated future business expansion.

3.5. Analysis of Sustaining and Restricting Factors

The execution of this community engagement program was influenced by several internal and external conditional dynamics. Evaluating these factors provides essential lessons for replicating micro-enterprise empowerment initiatives in similar urban ecosystems. Table 6 presents the structured evaluation of sustaining (enabling) and restricting (barrier) factors encountered during implementation.

As detailed in Table 6, the primary enabling factor was the synergy between a highly durable vendor operating in a high-density student market and structured university mentoring. Conversely, overcoming vendor apathy toward branding and bridging digital illiteracy required persistent, hands-on demonstration of short-term benefits.

3.6. Quantitative and Qualitative Impact Assessment

Following the 4-week mentoring and intervention period, a post-implementation evaluation was conducted to assess operational changes. The comparative baseline versus post-intervention indicators are summarized in Table 7.

The post-intervention results confirmed that combining physical product presentation upgrades with elementary digital visibility and structured financial tracking significantly elevated the market competitiveness of *UMKM Gorengan Abang Aldi*. The enterprise

Table 6. Conditional Analysis of Sustaining and Restricting Factors in Program Execution

Sustaining Factors (Enablers)	Restricting Factors (Barriers)
1. Massive Campus Market Demand: High density and continuous consumption patterns of university students seeking affordable snack foods. **2. Strong Vendor Continuity:** Over 16 years of operational experience provided the vendor with mature technical production skills and deep local market familiarity. **3. Institutional Academic Support:** Active facilitation and guidance from university advisors, providing structured frameworks and student engagement teams.	**1. Self-Financing Capital Constraints:** Financial capital limitations restricted immediate large-scale transition to industrial machinery or mass packaging orders. **2. Initial Digital Illiteracy:** Low baseline familiarity of the business owner regarding social media algorithms, content scheduling, and digital customer management. **3. Initial Apathy Toward Branding:** Initial skepticism from the traditional vendor regarding whether custom packaging and brand identity directly influence daily cash sales.

Table 7. Comparative Impact Assessment: Pre-Intervention vs. Post-Intervention State

Operational Dimension	Pre-Intervention State	Post-Intervention State
Daily Sales Record-Keeping	Non-existent; informal estimation of daily cash balance.	Structured daily cash ledger tracking gross revenue, material costs, and net margin.
Packaging Standard	Single-use thin plastic bags; grease leakage and moisture buildup.	Custom grease-resistant paper bags with brand logo; enhanced hygiene and heat retention.
Brand Identity	Anonymous street cart (”*Gorengan biasa*”); zero brand retention.	Recognized local brand (*Gorengan Abang Aldi*); established identity.
Promotional Reach	Radius restricted to immediate physical street visibility on Jl. Batong Raya.	Expanded digital visibility across campus social media networks and messaging groups.
Vendor Digital Competency	Zero familiarity with business digital tools or social media promotion.	Ability to independently operate simple digital ledger apps and post daily menu updates.

successfully transformed from an anonymous street vendor into a structured, brand-conscious micro-enterprise better positioned for long-term economic resilience.

4. Discussion

4.1. Theoretical Contextualization: Marketing Mix (4P) and Product Differentiation

The empirical findings of this community engagement program demonstrate that informal culinary micro-enterprises operating in competitive urban environments can significantly enhance their market presence through structured, low-cost operational adaptations. Within traditional street food ecosystems, micro-vendors frequently operate under the assumption that price and proximity are the sole determinants of consumer choice. However, as revealed in the baseline analysis of *UMKM Gorengan Abang Aldi*, market saturation around campus corridors creates an environment where price parity (IDR 2,000 per unit across competing stalls) renders conventional vendors structurally vulnerable to customer churn and low brand retention.

This operational reality strongly aligns with the Marketing Mix theoretical framework articulated by Kotler and Keller [4]. According to Kotler and Keller, in mature or saturated commodity markets, long-term business survival depends on the firm's capacity to execute strategic differentiation across the core operational dimensions of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (4P). In the context of street food micro-enterprises, product differentiation does not require complex technological manufacturing; rather, it manifests through incremental innovations that elevate perceived customer value.

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Figure 2. Field implementation and participatory interaction between the university project team and the street food vendor partner (*Abang Aldi*) on Jalan Batong Raya, South Jakarta.

As implemented during this intervention, transitioning from unbranded, thin single-use plastic bags to customized eco-friendly paper packaging featuring a distinct brand logo directly addresses the "Product" and "Promotion" dimensions simultaneously. Physical packaging serves as a critical tactile touchpoint that shapes consumer perception of food hygiene, safety, and overall product quality. For student consumers—who increasingly prioritize environmental sustainability and sanitary standards—hygienic, branded paper packaging elevates the *perceived value* of a humble fried snack without forcing an increase in retail price. This intervention shows that micro-enterprises can achieve meaningful product differentiation and build brand equity while strictly adhering to an affordable price point (IDR 2,000/unit), thereby preserving their core market volume.

4.2. Competitive Strategy in Saturated Urban Markets

The operational trajectory of *UMKM Gorengan Abang Aldi*—achieving an average daily gross turnover (*omzet*) of IDR 4,000,000 across 16 years of continuous operation—illustrates high baseline demand, yet also underscores the strategic limits of purely conventional operations. With daily production reaching approximately 2,000 units, the business operates at high volume but low profit margins per unit. In the analytical framework of Porter [5], micro-vendors in informal markets inherently pursue a *cost leadership* approach by maintaining low operational overhead and sourcing fresh raw materials directly from local traditional markets (*Pasar Tradisional*).

However, Porter's competitive framework dictates that pure cost leadership without differentiation leaves firms exposed to severe external risks, including raw material inflation (e.g., sudden spikes in cooking oil or wheat flour prices) and low consumer switching costs. When competing vendors offer virtually identical products along the same street corridor (Jalan Batong Raya), consumers experience zero switching costs. By introducing menu diversification—such as modern flavor toppings for best-selling items like crispy fritters (*bakwan*), stuffed tofu (*tahu isi*), and fried tempeh (*tempe*)—alongside branded visual identity, the micro-enterprise successfully pivots toward a *focused differentiation strategy*.

This hybrid approach enables the vendor to defend its existing market share against neighboring street-side competitors while simultaneously capturing higher-value segments among campus consumers. Product innovation in MSMEs can strengthen market resilience by helping small firms create distinct brand recall and reduce their exposure to aggressive price-based competition.

4.3. Digitalization and the Transition from Informal to Semi-Formal Operations

A central finding of this initiative concerns the transformative impact of elementary digital adoption on traditional micro-enterprises. Prior to intervention, the partner enterprise relied exclusively on passive foot-traffic visibility and traditional word-of-mouth marketing. In contemporary urban economies, this physical constraint creates a "geographic boundary" that limits customer acquisition and leaves the business highly vulnerable to localized disruptions, such as unfavorable weather conditions or academic holiday breaks when campus foot traffic plummets.

The activation of basic digital marketing channels (Instagram and TikTok) and the preparation for online food delivery gateway integration (GoFood, GrabFood) represent a crucial step in bridging the digital divide for informal vendors. Digital empowerment among MSMEs is not merely about adopting technology for its own sake, but about expanding market accessibility and establishing direct communication channels with tech-savvy demographic groups. For university students, visual social media platforms serve as primary discovery channels for local culinary offerings. Short-form video content demonstrating clean frying processes, fresh daily material preparation, and crisp texture transforms a standard street snack into an appealing, trendy culinary experience.

Furthermore, the implementation of structured daily cash flow ledger management represents a vital structural shift from informal cash handling to disciplined financial governance. In traditional street food vending, business owners frequently mix personal household funds with daily business revenue, obscuring actual net operating margins, masking capital depreciation, and preventing long-term reinvestment planning. Introducing simplified, separate daily cash tracking allows the business owner to accurately isolate true operating profits, calculate cost of goods sold (COGS), and build financial reserves for future business expansion or equipment upgrades.

4.4. Socio-Economic Dynamics, Restricting Factors, and Sustainability

While the positive outcomes of this community engagement intervention demonstrate clear operational benefits, a critical analysis must address the systemic restricting factors encountered during execution. As highlighted in the conditional factor evaluation, small-scale street food vendors face three primary structural barriers:

1. **Financial Capital Constraints:** Limited liquidity prevents micro-vendors from making immediate, large-scale capital investments in modern commercial kitchen hardware or bulk eco-friendly packaging orders. Consequently, interventions must be designed as low-cost, high-impact incremental adjustments rather than expensive operational overhauls.
2. **Initial Digital Illiteracy:** Business owners who have operated successfully for over a decade using purely traditional methods often exhibit low initial digital literacy. Overcoming this barrier requires sustained, direct human mentoring and simplified digital tool design rather than abstract training seminars.

3. **Vendor Apathy Toward Branding:** Traditional operators frequently view branding, logo creation, and custom packaging as unnecessary overhead costs that do not directly translate into immediate cash sales. Demonstrating short-term qualitative gains—such as positive customer feedback and improved product heat retention in paper packaging—is essential for building vendor buy-in and long-term compliance.

These findings underscore the indispensable role of higher education institutions in facilitating sustainable community engagement. As an academic outreach project (*Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*), university teams serve as trusted knowledge brokers who can translate formal business theories into practical, accessible tools for grassroots economic actors. By providing hands-on mentorship, university-led initiatives bridge the gap between academic theory and practical execution, fostering socio-economic resilience and empowering informal micro-enterprises to thrive in an increasingly digitized economy.

5. Conclusion

This community engagement initiative successfully demonstrates that integrating academic business management models—specifically SWOT diagnostic mapping and the 4P Marketing Mix strategy—with direct, participatory mentorship significantly enhances the market competitiveness, operational efficiency, and brand equity of small-scale campus-based street food enterprises. By implementing tailored interventions, including eco-friendly branded packaging, modern flavor menu diversification, social media digital marketing activation, and structured daily cash-flow bookkeeping, the partner micro-enterprise (*UMKM Gorengan Abang Aldi*) successfully transformed from a purely traditional, anonymous street cart into a digitally visible, brand-conscious, and financially transparent business entity. The empirical findings confirm that small-scale culinary vendors can achieve meaningful product differentiation and build long-term customer loyalty without compromising their core price-accessibility advantage (IDR 2,000 per unit) or alienating their primary university student market. Furthermore, overcoming structural operational bottlenecks—such as initial vendor digital illiteracy, financial capital constraints, and apathy toward formal branding—requires sustained, hands-on university mentorship that bridges academic knowledge with grassroots economic realities. To maintain long-term business resilience and financial health, it is strongly recommended that the partner vendor consistently maintains separate personal-and-business financial ledgers, continuously updates digital promotional channels, and systematically expands sales distribution through integration into online food delivery platforms (such as GoFood and GrabFood) to reach broader urban consumer segments beyond immediate campus boundaries.

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