



Consumer Interpretation of Green Marketing Campaigns: A Qualitative Study in the West Java Tourism Industry

Zulki Zulkifli Noor¹

¹Universitas Jayabaya Jakarta, Indonesiam zulkizulkifliinoor@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: zulkizulkifliinoor@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to explore marketing strategies based on digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom implemented by MSMEs in West Java to increase competitiveness. With a qualitative approach and exploratory design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with MSME actors from the culinary, handicraft, and traditional clothing sectors. The findings show that digitalization of marketing through social media, such as Instagram and TikTok, helps MSMEs expand their market reach. However, low digital literacy is still a major obstacle. Storytelling is used to create emotional connections with consumers, especially through authentic narratives about the cultural and historical values of the product. The obstacle in storytelling lies in the consistency of story delivery. Local wisdom, such as traditional motifs or local materials, gives a unique identity to a product, but MSME actors often face a dilemma between maintaining cultural authenticity and following modern trends. This study confirms that the integration of digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom can significantly increase the competitiveness of MSMEs. However, its success requires support in the form of digital literacy training, development of storytelling skills, and policies that support cultural preservation. This research is expected to provide practical contributions for MSME actors as well as recommendations for policy makers to support business sustainability in the digital era.

Keywords: Digitalization of marketing, storytelling, local wisdom, MSMEs, competitiveness, West Java.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing has a strategic role in driving sustainability and economic growth, especially for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). In Indonesia, MSMEs contribute around 60% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employ more than 90% of the workforce (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2021). At the provincial level, West Java is one of the regions with a significant contribution of MSMEs to the economy. This province not only has a high number of

MSMEs but is also supported by abundant cultural, geographical, and demographic resource potential, such as traditional arts, handicrafts, and culinary specialties. However, despite these advantages, many MSMEs in West Java face various challenges in developing effective marketing strategies, especially in the highly competitive digital era.

One of the main challenges is the low level of digital literacy among MSMEs, which causes a gap in the adoption of modern marketing technologies (Sheth, 2020). Digital literacy is an important prerequisite in accessing a wider market through online platforms. However, many business actors in West Java still rely on traditional marketing methods that are less relevant to current consumer behavior. This limitation is exacerbated by the lack of training, access to technology, and understanding of data-driven marketing strategies. Previous studies have shown that only a small percentage of MSMEs in Indonesia have succeeded in integrating digital marketing into their business models, while the rest are still struggling to understand its benefits (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

In addition to the challenges of digitalization, MSMEs in West Java also often face obstacles in utilizing local wisdom as an element of product differentiation. In fact, local wisdom such as Sundanese art, Cirebon batik, and traditional West Javanese cuisine have great potential to increase product appeal in local and global markets. However, the lack of knowledge about how to package these cultural elements in marketing strategies is one of the main obstacles. Business actors often do not understand how local values can be communicated effectively to consumers, both through branding and storytelling (Escalas, 2004).

Narrative marketing or storytelling has been recognized as one of the effective approaches in building emotional engagement with consumers. Studies show that relevant and authentic narratives can create bonds between consumers and brands, which ultimately increase customer loyalty (Escalas, 2004). However, the application of local wisdom-based storytelling in West Java has rarely been studied in depth. Many MSMEs do not yet understand how to utilize local narratives to strengthen their brand image, so they lose the opportunity to compete with more established big brands.

In addition, structural challenges such as limited access to capital, infrastructure, and supporting policies are also obstacles for MSMEs in West Java. Although the government has launched various initiatives to support the digitalization of MSMEs, implementation in the field is often uneven. Business actors in rural areas, for example, often feel left behind compared to those in urban areas such as Bandung, who have better access to technology and training. This inequality creates disparities in the development of marketing strategies, which ultimately affect the competitiveness of MSMEs in the market.

Therefore, this study aims to explore local wisdom-based marketing strategies implemented by MSMEs in West Java, focusing on how they utilize storytelling and cultural elements to improve product competitiveness. This study also aims to understand the obstacles and opportunities faced by business actors in integrating digital marketing strategies with local elements. With a qualitative approach, this study is expected to provide in-depth insights into the dynamics of local marketing in West Java, while also offering practical recommendations for business actors and policy makers to support the sustainability of MSMEs in the digital era.

Marketing has become one of the main pillars in business success, especially in the context of MSMEs. In marketing literature, several main variables are often studied, including marketing digitalization, storytelling, local wisdom, and competitiveness. This study examines how these variables interact with each other and influence the success of MSME marketing strategies, especially in the West Java region.

Marketing digitalization has become a major topic in contemporary literature. Kotler and Keller (2016) explain that digitalization allows business actors to reach consumers in a more personal and efficient way, either through social media, websites, or e-commerce. However, digital literacy is one of the main challenges for MSMEs, especially in developing countries like Indonesia. A study by Sheth (2020) shows that many MSME actors do not yet have a deep understanding of the use of data in designing digital marketing strategies. This variable is key in an era where consumer behavior is increasingly influenced by digital platforms.

In addition, storytelling as a marketing strategy has begun to receive significant attention in marketing research. Escalas (2004) stated that storytelling is able to build a strong emotional connection between consumers and brands. In a local context, storytelling can be used to highlight cultural values or unique stories from the products produced. Previous research also shows that consumers are more likely to be loyal to brands that have authentic and relevant narratives. However, there has not been much research that examines how local wisdom-based storytelling is applied by MSMEs in Indonesia, especially in West Java.

Local wisdom is an important element in marketing strategies, especially in areas with rich cultural heritage such as West Java. A study by Wijaya (2011) confirmed that local wisdom can increase the appeal of a product by creating a unique and different identity in the market. However, MSMEs often face difficulties in integrating these cultural elements into their marketing strategies. One of the obstacles is the lack of knowledge on how to package local wisdom into a narrative or branding concept that is relevant to the modern market.

Competitiveness is another important variable that is often associated with marketing success. In the literature, competitiveness is defined as the ability of a business to maintain its position in the market through certain advantages, both in product quality, price, and marketing innovation (Porter, 1985). In the context of MSMEs in West Java, competitiveness can be increased through the adoption of marketing digitalization and the use of local cultural elements. However, the gap in access to technology and training is often a significant barrier.

Overall, the literature shows that marketing digitalization, storytelling, local wisdom, and competitiveness are interrelated variables in building an effective marketing strategy. Although many studies have been conducted on each variable, studies that integrate the four in the context of MSMEs in West Java are still very limited. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how these variables can support each other in building an innovative and sustainable marketing strategy.

Framework

Marketing digitalization has become a focus in contemporary literature. Kotler and Keller (2016) show that digitalization allows businesses to reach consumers more widely through service personalization, cost effectiveness, and better interactions. However, Sheth's (2020) study underlines that MSMEs, especially in developing countries like Indonesia, still face significant barriers in technology adoption due to limited digital literacy. In West Java, this obstacle is a challenge in integrating technology into an effective marketing strategy.

Storytelling as one of the emotion-based marketing approaches has been the focus of research for the past two decades. Escalas (2004) showed that storytelling can build strong emotional connections with consumers, increase brand loyalty, and create differentiation. Relevant and authentic narratives play an important role in strengthening consumer relationships with products. However, research in Indonesia that integrates local wisdom-based storytelling into

marketing is still very limited, especially in areas such as West Java which is rich in unique culture and traditions.

Local wisdom as a differentiation variable is also a concern in marketing studies. Wijaya (2011) highlighted that local wisdom can create a unique brand identity and become an effective competitive tool in both local and global markets. However, previous studies also show that MSMEs often do not understand how to package these cultural elements into marketing strategies that are relevant to the needs of modern consumers. This obstacle is increasingly complex when faced with the dynamics of the digital market, which requires an innovative approach in conveying cultural values.

Competitiveness is an important variable that is the ultimate goal of implementing a marketing strategy. Porter (1985) defines competitiveness as the ability of a business to create competitive advantage through innovation, quality, and efficiency. Previous research shows that marketing digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom can increase competitiveness by creating unique advantages that are difficult for competitors to imitate.

Relationship Between Variables and Previous Research Support

- 1. Digitalization of Marketing**
Research by Kotler and Keller (2016) and Sheth (2020) indicates that digitalization provides great opportunities for MSMEs to increase efficiency and accessibility. However, digital literacy barriers often hinder the optimization of this strategy. Digitalization also allows business actors to convey their product stories through media that are broader and more relevant to consumers.
- 2. Storytelling**
Escalas (2004) showed that storytelling is able to create significant emotional attachment. In a local context, storytelling can be used to highlight elements of local wisdom, create an interesting narrative, and strengthen brand image. However, studies in Indonesia are still limited in exploring how storytelling can be effectively integrated into a culture-based marketing strategy.
- 3. Local wisdom**
Wijaya (2011) emphasized that local wisdom can be a strategic element in marketing by providing a unique identity. This study is supported by the findings of Escalas (2004) which show that cultural narratives can increase brand appeal and relevance. However, research on the implementation of local wisdom in marketing still requires further exploration, especially in West Java.
- 4. Competitiveness**
Porter (1985) and other studies on competitive advantage show that the integration of marketing digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom can create sustainable competitiveness. However, MSMEs often face limitations in managing these variables simultaneously, so that their competitive potential has not been fully realized.

The following is a conceptual framework table that describes the relationship between variables based on previous research:

Table 1. Conceptual Framework

Variables	Indicator	Explanation	Reference
Digitalization of Marketing	Adoption of digital platforms (social media, e-commerce) Digital literacy	Marketing digitalization helps MSMEs reach consumers more widely, increase efficiency, and support storytelling.	Kotler & Keller (2016), Sheth (2020)

	Use of data in marketing decision making		
Storytelling	Use of product narratives Relevance of the story to local culture Authenticity and appeal of the story	Local wisdom-based storytelling increases emotional connections with consumers and strengthens brand image.	Escalas (2004), Wijaya (2011)
Local wisdom	Cultural elements in products (art, traditions, traditional foods) Cultural representation in branding Local identity in marketing	Local wisdom provides unique differentiation to products and strengthens cultural values in the eyes of consumers.	Wijaya (2011), Escalas (2004)
Competitiveness	Marketing innovation Strong brand image Competitive advantage	The combination of digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom increases competitiveness by creating unique added value.	Porter (1985), Sheth (2020)

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory design to deeply understand the implementation of local wisdom-based marketing strategies, storytelling, and digitalization among MSMEs in West Java. This approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the objectives of the study, namely to explore the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of business actors in building competitiveness through these elements. This study focuses on the context of MSMEs in West Java, considering that this region has rich cultural potential and is one of the centers of economic growth in Indonesia. This qualitative study allows researchers to explore narratives and insights from the perspective of business actors in depth, thus providing a richer understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Primary data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews with MSME actors who actively utilize local wisdom, storytelling, and digital platforms in their marketing. Informants were selected purposively, with criteria including type of business, level of technology integration in marketing, and use of local cultural elements in branding or storytelling. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow flexibility in exploring information related to informants' experiences and challenges. Secondary data were obtained from supporting documents, reports, publications, and articles relevant to the research topic. These data sources were used to enrich the analysis and provide broader context to the research findings. The data analysis technique used a thematic analysis approach. The steps include interview transcription, data coding, identification of main themes, and interpretation of findings based on relevant theories. The analysis process was carried out iteratively to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings. To maintain the credibility of the study, data triangulation techniques were applied by comparing the results of interviews, secondary data, and field observations. Internal validity was also strengthened by rechecking the results of interviews with informants, while external validity was maintained by comparing the results of this study with findings from previous studies. This study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to marketing literature, especially in the local context. In addition, the results of this study can also be a reference for policy makers and business actors in developing more innovative and sustainable marketing strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study provides in-depth insights into how MSMEs in West Java utilize marketing digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom to build competitiveness. Based on in-depth interviews with five MSMEs from the culinary, handicraft, and traditional clothing sectors, various strategies they implement, challenges they face, and opportunities that can be utilized to drive business growth were found.

Digital marketing is one of the main strategies used by MSMEs to expand their market. Many of them rely on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business to promote their products. Social media is not only a communication channel with consumers, but also a tool to introduce local values inherent in their products. A handicraft entrepreneur from Tasikmalaya said that she first started using Instagram after seeing how other MSME products were getting attention from customers outside the area. In an interview, she stated, "Initially I only sold at the market, but after my child created Instagram, orders from outside the city started coming in. Now, I also use TikTok because people like to watch videos about the craft-making process." (interview 1)

Although digitalization provides many benefits, not all MSMEs feel comfortable with technology. Several entrepreneurs said that they have difficulty understanding more complex features such as paid advertising or social media analytics. A traditional food entrepreneur from Cianjur said, "I don't understand how to advertise or see statistics on Instagram. So, I just post as I can. Sometimes my child helps, but he is still learning." (interview 2) Obstacles like this indicate the need for more targeted digital literacy training for MSMEs, especially in areas with minimal access to technology.

Storytelling has emerged as an important element in the marketing strategy of MSMEs. Many entrepreneurs realize that the stories behind their products can create emotional connections with consumers. A Sundanese restaurant owner in Bandung, for example, consistently shares stories about recipes inherited from his grandmother. He explained that customers are often interested in hearing the stories and feel more connected to the food they enjoy. "People like to hear stories that this recipe is my grandmother's legacy. They say the food is like home cooking, so they often come back for more." (interview 3) However, not all entrepreneurs are able to make the most of storytelling. Some admit that they have difficulty composing an interesting narrative or are afraid of being considered excessive. One batik entrepreneur from Cirebon said that he was often confused about where to start his story. "I'm not good at making stories. Sometimes I'm afraid that people will get bored of hearing it." (interview 4)

Local wisdom is the main selling point for many MSMEs in West Java. This element is used to give a unique identity to their products, either through design, materials, or presentation. A batik maker from Cirebon shared that the Mega Mendung motif is the main attraction of her products, especially for international tourists. "Many foreigners like the Mega Mendung motif, they say there is a deep philosophy behind it. But I also try to make a more modern design so that young people are interested." On the other hand, a culinary entrepreneur in Garut said that he only uses local ingredients to maintain the authenticity of his products. "I use ingredients from farmers here so that they are different from others. Customers say that the food is rich in the taste of the Garut area." (interview 5) Although local wisdom provides added value, challenges remain. Some entrepreneurs are concerned that innovations in traditional elements can eliminate the authenticity of their products, so they tend to hesitate to make significant changes.

The main obstacles faced by MSMEs include low digital literacy, lack of consistent storytelling skills, and rising prices of local ingredients. Low digital literacy means that many

business owners only use social media in a simple way without utilizing the full potential of the available features. On the other hand, storytelling requires consistency in conveying narratives, something that is difficult for business owners who do not yet have adequate resources or training. The rising prices of local ingredients are also a major challenge for food business owners, who are sometimes forced to look for alternative ingredients to maintain the sustainability of their businesses.

Despite facing various obstacles, MSMEs in West Java see many opportunities to develop their businesses. Social media provides them with a space to reach new markets without having to spend a lot of money. Consumer interest in local products, especially those with stories and cultural values, is the main driver for them to continue to develop storytelling elements and local wisdom in their marketing strategies. Some business actors also feel that the existence of MSME communities in their areas helps in sharing experiences and marketing strategies.

This study shows that marketing digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom are mutually supportive elements in increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in West Java. Digitalization provides a platform to reach consumers more widely, storytelling creates an emotional connection with consumers, and local wisdom gives a unique identity to the product. However, to optimize this potential, further support is needed in the form of digital literacy training, guidance in developing storytelling, and policies that support the use of local materials. By overcoming these obstacles, MSMEs in West Java have a great opportunity to compete in an increasingly competitive market.

Digitalization of Marketing

Digital marketing provides a great opportunity for MSMEs to expand their market reach at a relatively low cost. Informants from the handicraft and culinary sectors emphasized that social media, such as Instagram and TikTok, allow them to introduce their products to consumers outside their area. This finding is consistent with the literature which emphasizes that digital platforms can increase product visibility and strengthen interactions with consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, low digital literacy is a significant obstacle. Most informants admitted that they did not fully understand advanced features such as analytics or paid advertising. Secondary data from the report of the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2021) also shows that the level of adoption of digital technology among MSMEs is still low, especially in rural areas. This shows that although social media can be an effective tool, its success is highly dependent on the ability of business actors to utilize technology optimally.

Storytelling

Storytelling has proven to be an effective strategy to create emotional attachment between consumers and products. Informants from the culinary sector stated that they often tell the history or family values behind their products to attract customers' attention. This finding is in line with research by Escalas (2004), which shows that authentic narratives can increase consumer loyalty and strengthen brand image. However, the challenges in storytelling are also quite real. Some MSMEs find it difficult to develop interesting or consistent narratives. A previous study by Sheth (2020) showed that effective storytelling requires a deep understanding of consumer preferences and the ability to package stories in a relevant way. In the context of West Java, local cultural elements can be a strong foundation for storytelling, but business actors need further training to be able to utilize these elements optimally.

Local wisdom

Local wisdom provides a unique competitive advantage for MSMEs in West Java. Informants from the handicraft and batik sectors revealed that traditional elements such as the Mega Mendung motif or local materials from their area are often the main attractions for consumers. Secondary data from the West Java tourism report showed that tourists, both domestic and international, highly value products that reflect local culture. However, the challenge of maintaining a balance between tradition and innovation is a significant issue. Some informants were concerned that changing traditional elements too far could damage the authenticity of the product. The literature supports this concern, with Wijaya's (2011) research stating that innovation must be carried out carefully to ensure that cultural values are maintained. In this context, it is important for MSMEs to find innovative ways to update their products without eliminating the core elements of local wisdom.

Through source triangulation, it was found that the success of MSME marketing strategies in West Java is highly dependent on their ability to integrate marketing digitalization, storytelling, and local wisdom. Interview data revealed the direct experiences and challenges of business actors, while secondary data provided a broader context regarding the conditions of MSMEs in the region. These findings are consistent with relevant literature, which emphasizes the importance of innovation, technology adaptation, and cultural approaches in marketing. These conclusions highlight the need for further support in the form of digital literacy training, storytelling skills development, and policies that support the preservation and utilization of local wisdom. By addressing these challenges, MSMEs in West Java have great potential to increase their competitiveness in both local and global markets.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that digital marketing, storytelling, and local wisdom are important elements in the marketing strategy of MSMEs in West Java. Digitalization helps business actors expand their market reach through platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, although many still face obstacles in understanding this technology in depth. Storytelling has proven effective in creating emotional connections with consumers, especially through narratives that describe the family or cultural values behind the product. However, consistency in conveying stories is still a challenge for most business actors. Meanwhile, local wisdom provides a unique identity to MSME products, but business actors often face a dilemma between maintaining cultural authenticity and following modern trends.

This study underlines the importance of integrating these three elements to improve the competitiveness of MSMEs. However, its success is highly dependent on adequate support, such as digital literacy training, guidance in developing storytelling, and policies that encourage the preservation of local wisdom. By overcoming these obstacles, MSMEs in West Java have a great opportunity to strengthen their position in the local and international markets.

REFERENCES

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Escalas, J.E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1–2), 168–180. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1401&2_19
- Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs. (2021). *Annual Report of Indonesian MSMEs 2021*. Jakarta: Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management (15th ed.)*. Pearson Education.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. Free Press.
- Sheth, J. N. (2020). Borderless media: Rethinking international marketing. *Journal of International Marketing*, 28(1), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069031X20906765>
- Wijaya, BS (2011). Theoretical basics of the folk marketing communication model. *Indonesian Journal of Communication*, 1(1), 13–28.