

Empowering MSMEs through the Development of Food Courts Based on Location Strategy and Community Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

Backgrounds: Community service is a crucial dimension of impactful academic work, complementing teaching and research by providing practical solutions to real societal issues. One prominent challenge faced by MSME actors in Sumbercangkring Village, Gurah Subdistrict, Kediri Regency, is the lack of strategic, comfortable, and accessible business locations. Many local entrepreneurs struggle to secure proper trading spaces, while the village possesses untapped potential in the form of a spacious parking area owned by Mr. Erwin, located along a busy main road.

Objectives: This community service initiative was conducted to assist in designing a feasible food court model from marketing and management perspectives, strengthen MSME capacity in branding, promotion, and operational management, and build collaborative community involvement to support the establishment of a sustainable culinary centre.

Methodology: The implementation methods included initial observation, MSME needs mapping, focus group discussions, marketing strategy mentoring, tenant management training, and the development of a comprehensive food court blueprint.

Findings: The results indicate that the food court initiative provides an effective strategic solution for MSMEs by offering a representative business location, increasing collective brand visibility, and enabling marketing synergy among tenants.

Conclusions: The community-based food court demonstrates strong potential as a sustainable MSME marketing hub. To ensure long-term sustainability, the programme should be further developed through partnership schemes, community-based branding, and collaborative village business models.

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1. INTRODUCTION

MSMEs are a strategic economic sector that supports the local economy, but they face a major obstacle in the form of inadequate access to business locations. Many MSMEs in rural areas do not yet have a permanent, representative, and easily accessible place to sell their products. This condition causes businesses to be unstable and difficult to develop a loyal customer base (Safitri et al., 2023). In addition, non-strategic locations often make MSMEs less competitive than businesses with higher visibility and better facilities (Dewi et al., 2022). MSMEs are a sector that contributes significantly to the local economy (Hidayah & Avisca, 2021). Still, one of the main challenges for MSMEs in developing villages is the limited availability of strategic business locations. In Sumbercangkring Village, some MSME players still carry out their buying and selling activities in different places, utilising their house terraces, or trading mobile without a fixed location. This condition makes it difficult for MSMEs to build a customer base, carry out branding, and increase sales consistently. The phenomenon of SMEs in Sumbercangkring Village struggling to obtain

strategic business locations is in line with national research findings which show that strategic place is a fundamental element in the marketing mix for the culinary and retail sectors.

On the other hand, there is a potential local opportunity, namely Mr Erwin's house, which is located on the main road of the village with a large parking area. This strategic location can be transformed into an integrated business space in the form of a food court or market that accommodates several MSMEs in one location. A food court is a collective marketing model that combines location strategy, consumer convenience, and collaboration between business actors. A food court is a location-based marketing model that centralises several MSMEs in one area, thereby creating a collaborative economic ecosystem (Akrivou et al., 2022)). The community service study by Safitri et al. (2023) shows that redesigning village food courts, giving them a brand identity, and registering their locations on Google Maps can increase the number of visitors and strengthen the appeal of local cuisine.

Community service is a crucial extension of academic work, offering practical solutions to societal issues while strengthening the link between universities and local communities (Fisher et al., 2013). In Sumbercangkring Village, Gurah Subdistrict, Kediri Regency, one key challenge faced by local MSMEs is the lack of strategic, safe, and accessible business locations, which limits their market reach and competitiveness. At the same time, the village has untapped potential, such as a spacious parking area on the main road owned by Mr. Erwin, that can be transformed into a shared commercial asset. This community service initiative was therefore conducted to design a feasible food court as a community-based marketing hub, strengthen MSME capacity in branding and business management, and build collaborative structures for sustainable operation. Beyond simply documenting an intervention, this report contributes to broader academic discourse by providing empirical evidence for participatory development models in rural settings and demonstrating how location-based marketing strategies and consumer-flow design can enhance the visibility and performance of micro-enterprises. Through this dual practical-and-theoretical relevance, the study offers insights that can inform future research and policy on rural MSME empowerment. The food court model has proven effective in increasing:

- 1) Customer flow, the flow of visitors within the food court area, from entering, walking around, viewing tenants, to making purchases. A well-organised food court improves the flow of visitors, makes it easier for them to find tenants, and encourages higher transaction opportunities.
- 2) Brand visibility, refers to the level of visibility and ease with which consumers recognise tenant brands within the food court. With a shared location, signboard design, and collective promotion, the identity of each MSME is more easily seen, thereby increasing the chances of being recognised and chosen by visitors.
- 3) Collaboration between tenants. Food courts create a centralised business space that encourages interaction and cooperation between MSME players, such as sharing facilities, creating joint promotional packages, or organising culinary events. This collaboration increases the appeal of the food court and strengthens the business ecosystem collectively.
- 4) Operational cost efficiency. With various facilities (electricity, water, cleaning, security, dining area), the operational costs of each tenant are lower than if they were to open their own business. This efficiency allows MSMEs to increase their profit margins and allocate funds for innovation or marketing.
- 5) Perception of business professionalism. A well-organised, clean, and tidy food court gives tenants a professional image. Consumers tend to trust and choose businesses that appear more structured, safe, and comfortable, thereby increasing the credibility and reputation of MSMEs in the eyes of customers.

Lady & Ricky (2024) research on 'HU Foodcourt' also shows that well-managed food courts can improve tenants' digital marketing capabilities and attract consumers on an ongoing basis. In the context of marketing management, location strategy is one of the important elements in the marketing mix (Kotler et al., 2024). The right business location can increase customer flow, strengthen brand perception, and increase transaction opportunities (Ulaga et al., 2002). Through the development of community-based food courts, MSMEs can obtain stronger synergistic effects, including in terms of visibility, joint promotion, and facility sharing (Siburian & Saputra, 2025).

Mr. Erwin's food court development plan is a form of community-based marketing hub, which is an effort to improve the performance of village MSMEs.

Location is one of the main elements in marketing strategy. Kotler explains that a strategic location can increase ease of access, visibility, and the decision to visit. Several recent studies show that business locations at major traffic points can increase spontaneous visits and repeat purchases (Veranita et al., 2022). The results of the Mekarmukti Village Food Court study (Safitri et al., 2023) confirm that layout, parking access, and proximity to main roads are important factors in increasing culinary SME sales. Mr Erwin's house, which is located on the side of a major road and has a large car park, fully meets the empirical criteria for an excellent marketing location for building a food court. Digital transformation is a major factor in increasing the competitiveness of SMEs. Several recent studies show that digital marketing based on social media, Google Maps, and e-commerce can expand market reach, increase brand awareness, create customer interaction, and encourage repeat orders (Khrais & Gabori, 2023; Putra et al., 2023). The study by Dewi et al. (2022) confirms that digital marketing training directly improves the marketing competence of SMEs, particularly in branding and customer communication strategies.

Based on this phenomenon, this community service initiative is designed to assist the community, particularly local SMEs, in formulating and developing village food courts as integrated marketing centres, while also creating a sustainable community service model based on community collaboration. This community service activity addresses several key challenges faced by MSMEs in Sumbercangkring Village. First, it explores how to design an appropriate and strategically located food court model that meets the operational needs of local micro-entrepreneurs while maximizing consumer access and visibility. Second, it examines how marketing strategy empowerment can enable MSMEs to utilize the food court as a shared branding and promotional space, enhancing collective visibility and attracting more customers. Finally, the activity focuses on building community collaboration among landowners, MSME actors, and local organizations to ensure the long-term sustainability of the food court's operations, fostering a sense of shared ownership and coordinated management for continued economic and social benefits.

2. METHOD

2.1. Approach and Implementation Strategy

This activity utilises a participatory development approach involving MSMEs, landowners (Mr Erwin), village leaders, and the local community. This approach ensures that the design of the food court meets the social and economic needs of the community in Sumbercangkring village, Gurah sub-district, Kediri regency.

2.2. Implementation Stages

Implementation is carried out in several stages:

a. Initial Observation and Location Mapping

The community service team carried out several steps, namely: observation of Mr Erwin's house location, mapping of the condition of the parking lot, analysis of accessibility and traffic potential, identification of opportunities and obstacles for food court development.

b. Mapping the Needs of MSMEs

Activities were carried out through several methods, including: interviewing MSME actors, identifying facility needs (stalls, electricity, signage, dining areas), and mapping potential culinary and non-culinary business types.

c. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The FGD was held with the aim of aligning perceptions and determining the choice of food court model, including: determining the types of tenants, kiosk layout, joint rental and management systems, and food court promotion strategies.

d. MSME Marketing Strategy Training

The training material covered: branding and visual identity, digital promotion (WhatsApp, Instagram, and Google Maps), customer service management, and strategies for building repeat orders.

e. Food Court Blueprint Development

The community service team developed a preliminary design covering: location layout, kiosk design, visitor flow system, shared facility plans, and the food court name and brand concept.

f. Initial Implementation Assistance

Support is provided in the form of: design consultation, soft-opening planning, basic legal assistance (business permits, NIB, p-irt, halal certification), and development of operational SOPs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Result

3.1.1. Location Findings and Development Potential

Observations show that the land in front of Mr Erwin's house has strategic advantages, including:

- It is located on a busy village road.
- It has adequate parking space for motorcycles and cars.
- It is close to residential areas and schools.
- Potential to create a 'new local economic node'.

This potential strongly supports location-based marketing strategies, where visibility and ease of access are key factors in attracting consumers.

3.1.2. MSME Needs and Food Court Feasibility

MSMEs expressed several key needs:

- A comfortable place to sell, protected from heat and rain
- Access to electricity and water
- Permanent or semi-permanent stalls
- Dining areas for customers and takeaway
- Collective promotion

Based on this mapping, the food court concept is considered feasible as it can meet almost all SME needs in an integrated manner.

3.1.3. Designing a Food Court Model Based on Marketing Strategy



Figure 1. Conceptual Design of the Food Court Pusat Rasa Brand: Marketing Strategy and Visual Identity Approach

The FGD results displayed in the Figure 1 produced a conceptual design for the food court with several marketing elements:

- Food Court Brand
 - Several name suggestions emerged, such as:
 - 'Pujasera Pusat Rasa' (Centre of Flavours Food Court)
 - 'Kamtiv Market Sumbercangkring'
 - 'Sentra Kuliner Erwin' (Erwin's Culinary Centre)

The food court brand was created to increase brand recall and facilitate location identification. In the end, the name ‘Pujasera Pusat Rasa’ was agreed upon.

2) Consumer Flow Layout

- a. The floor plan was carefully designed from the outset to ensure that:
- b. Visitors can easily enter and exit from the same direction, with easy access
- c. Tenants are arranged according to culinary category, with colourful banners

The dining area is located in the centre of the complex and can accommodate large orders. It is located next to the pharmacy and is neatly arranged (plum pentol and fried foods, gado-gado, kebabs, siomay, risoles, etc.).

3) Joint Promotion

The initial promotional strategy agreed upon includes:

- a. Large banners installed on the main road with the name ‘Pujasera Pusat Rasa’ along with images and names of the products sold.
- b. Registration of the location on Google Maps is being prepared.
- c. Creation of a food court Instagram account is in the validation process.
- d. Opening promotions, in the form of vouchers, discounts, special prices, and bonuses.



Figure 2. Field Implementation vs. 3D Design of the Pusat Rasa Food Court Design

Figure 2 presents a comparative visualization between the field implementation of the Pusat Rasa Food Court and its initial 3D architectural design. The comparison highlights the extent to which the physical development aligns with the conceptual planning established during the design phase. The 3D model illustrates the intended spatial organization, including stall arrangement, central dining space, pedestrian flow patterns, and the overall aesthetic concept of the food court environment.

The field implementation images demonstrate how these design elements were translated into the actual construction, showing the establishment of semi-permanent stalls, the placement of communal seating, and the adoption of branding elements consistent with the visual identity proposed in the conceptual plan. The comparison underscores both the feasibility of the design blueprint and the community’s commitment to realizing a functional, organized, and visually cohesive MSME cluster. The images provide a clear representation of the transformation from proposed design to real-world execution, illustrating the practical outcomes of collaborative planning and MSME-driven development.

3.1.4. Strengthening MSME Capacity

Marketing training has resulted in an increase in MSME understanding of:

- 1) Creating memorable product brands that are in line with the desired image
- 2) Determining competitive prices in line with market standards

- 3) Managing customer service, where all staff must be able to serve consumers and customers well, for example by smiling, greeting and saying hello
- 4) Optimising free social media; with the availability of Wi-Fi, MSME actors can update information and promotions on social media.

MSMEs that were previously passive are now better prepared to compete and present themselves professionally.

3.1.5. Community Collaboration Model for Sustainability

The sustainability of food courts is not only determined by location, but also by collaboration between actors. Several village empowerment studies show that the formation of a joint management team (venue owners, MSME actors, youth organisations) can increase accountability, profit distribution, and programme sustainability (Ayuningtyas, 2024). Community collaboration also strengthens:

- a. social solidarity,
- b. a sense of ownership of the shared business location,
- c. a transparent management system,
- d. collective marketing innovation (Bucos, 2024).

An agreement was reached to establish a food court management team consisting of: Landowners, MSME actors, and Youth organisations. This collaborative system forms the foundation for the economic and social sustainability of the food court. Despite the positive outcomes, several potential challenges may affect the long-term success of the Pujasera Pusat Rasa food court. Ongoing maintenance costs for utilities, stall repairs, and sanitation could strain limited resources, while conflicts or inconsistent participation within the management team may disrupt operations. Additionally, seasonal fluctuations in customer flow could impact tenant revenues and overall profitability. To mitigate these risks, the project plans to establish clear financial management and cost-sharing mechanisms, implement regular communication and conflict-resolution protocols within the collaborative management team, and design flexible marketing and promotional strategies to maintain customer engagement throughout the year. These measures aim to enhance the resilience and sustainability of the food court for future adopters.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the development of Pujasera Pusat Rasa represents a strategic model of MSME empowerment that integrates spatial advantages, collaborative governance, and marketing-oriented design. This section discusses the broader implications of these findings, how they align with or diverge from existing community-based MSME models, why the approach proves effective in practice, and what limitations must be considered for future sustainability.

3.2.1. Interpretation of Findings

The strategic location of the food court, positioned along a busy village road and in close proximity to residential areas and schools, reinforces the critical role of accessibility and visibility in fostering local economic growth. Research has consistently shown that micro-business clusters located near high-activity zones tend to attract greater foot traffic and experience stronger consumer retention (McFadden & O hEigeartaigh, 2003). In this regard, the land contributed by Mr. Erwin acts as a foundational asset, enabling the emergence of a new economic node that benefits both MSME actors and the village community.

Insights gathered from the MSME actors further reveal a strong demand for adequate shelter, access to water and electricity, semi-permanent stalls, centralized dining areas, and collective marketing mechanisms. These needs align with patterns observed in successful community food

courts across Indonesia and Southeast Asia, where shared infrastructure significantly reduces individual startup barriers and enhances operational efficiency (Crowley, 2015). The development of a unified brand identity, the deliberate structuring of the consumer flow layout (Wheeler, 2017), and the integration of joint promotional strategies demonstrate that incorporating marketing considerations into spatial design can substantially strengthen MSME competitiveness and improve consumer experience (Huda et al., 2025).

3.2.2. Comparison with Existing Models

When compared with traditional, modern, and government-driven MSME cluster models, Pusat Rasa exhibits characteristics that position it as a unique hybrid. Unlike conventional village markets, which often grow organically and lack coherent branding or organized spatial structure, the Pusat Rasa model incorporates deliberate design elements that create a more orderly and visually appealing environment for business operations. Relative to modern urban food courts, the initiative differs by emphasizing community ownership and collaborative governance rather than corporate management and profit maximization. This results in an environment where shared benefits, equitable participation, and social cohesion take precedence. Additionally, the model distinguishes itself from top-down government-initiated MSME centers, which frequently underperform due to limited community involvement or weak local ownership (Manama, 2017). In contrast, the collaborative management framework adopted in this project directly responds to such shortcomings by centering decision-making within the community itself. Through these combined elements (structured design, marketing orientation, and participatory governance) the Pusat Rasa food court operates as an intermediary model that is both modern in function and community-driven in ethos.

3.2.3. Why this Approach is Effective

The effectiveness of the model can be attributed to several mutually reinforcing factors. The advantageous location provides built-in marketing value by exposing MSME products to continuous pedestrian and vehicular traffic, echoing the principles of location-based economic development. The establishment of a unified brand identity under the name “Pujasera Pusat Rasa” strengthens collective recognition and reduces the individual promotional burden on MSME actors, while simultaneously enhancing consumer recall and trust. The layout of the space, which organizes tenants by culinary category and situates the dining area at the center, creates a smooth circulation pattern that invites visitors to explore and spend more time within the food court. This spatial arrangement not only improves comfort but can also increase purchasing likelihood.

Furthermore, joint promotional efforts, such as shared banners, coordinated social media presence, and registration on digital platforms, magnify marketing reach while minimizing costs, an approach aligned with the principles of digital empowerment for small enterprises (Dektariova, 2024). The collaborative governance model involving landowners, MSMEs, and youth organizations contributes to transparency, shared responsibility, and long-term commitment (Purnomo & Purwandari, 2025). Collectively, these elements create a synergistic system in which spatial design, branding, digital visibility, and community management reinforce one another, making the Pusat Rasa initiative both operationally effective and socially sustainable.

3.2.4. Limitations of the Model

Despite its strengths, several limitations warrant consideration. The success of the collaborative governance structure depends heavily on ongoing commitment from all actors involved; variations in participation levels, leadership changes, or conflicting interests can disrupt operational stability. In terms of infrastructure, sustained resource allocation is necessary to cover

utilities, repairs, maintenance, sanitation, and ongoing promotional materials. Without clear financial planning and revenue-sharing mechanisms, the long-term sustainability of the food court may be jeopardized.

Additionally, although marketing training has enhanced MSME capacity, the digital proficiency of participants remains uneven. Some MSME actors may still lack the skills or confidence required to consistently produce online content or maintain active engagement on social media platforms. The physical layout of the land also imposes natural limits on scalability, as the number of stalls and expansion possibilities are constrained by available space. Replication of the model in other locations would require adaptation to local contexts, resource availability, and community readiness. Finally, like many culinary-based enterprises, food courts remain vulnerable to external economic conditions, including fluctuations in consumer purchasing power, seasonal variations, and competition from new eateries or delivery platforms. Recognizing these limitations is crucial for developing strategies that will enhance the long-term effectiveness and resilience of the initiative. Continuous evaluation, adaptive management, and strengthened digital and financial capacities will be essential for ensuring that Pusat Rasa remains a sustainable and replicable model of MSME empowerment.

4. CONCLUSION

This community service demonstrates that the development of a food court based on location strategy and community collaboration is an innovative solution to overcome the problem of limited business premises for MSMEs in Sumbercangkring Village. The utilisation of Mr Erwin's strategic land can be a catalyst for strengthening the village economy through integrated marketing. In addition to helping MSMEs obtain suitable business premises, the food court also strengthens branding, increases visibility, and creates a sustainable collaborative space. This programme has the potential to develop into a village culinary centre that can improve community welfare and attract consumers from surrounding areas. The formation of a food court management team involving Mr Erwin and village MSMEs ensures that the programme will run for multiple years and will not stop after the physical construction is complete.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Author Contributions

A.S.D.: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing.

E.S.: Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing.

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Informed Consent

The involved community granted its consent for the initiative.

Ethical Approval

This project was ethically approved, and informed consent was obtained from all participants and the community.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [A.S.D.] upon reasonable request.

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