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Original Article

# Investigating the Technological Input in Culinary Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Relation to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are important to regional economic development. MSMEs conduct business activities that can expand and provide opportunities for the community to obtain higher income and encourage economic growth. Moreover, the technology used in their business development enables them to grow during an economic crisis, thereby contributing to regional and national stability. This study uses descriptive quantitative methods to determine and analyze the existence of innovative and creative technology used by MSMEs actors before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents in this study amounted to 100 culinary entrepreneurs in Pontianak City. The conclusion is that the innovations made by MSMEs actors include using online sales services, making unique products, changing product packaging and holding promotions, employing innovative marketing strategies, and providing innovative consumer facilities. Meanwhile, the creative strategies employed included adding herbal ingredients to the products sold, making new packaging, creating shops and product arrangements, and updating menus and product bundling.

Keywords: micro, small, and medium enterprises; innovation; creativity; product; technology



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#### 1. Introduction

Economic growth is a condition in which a country can increase its production output based on technological advances and accompanied by the ideological adjustments it needs (Jhingan, 2013). The economic growth of West Kalimantan in 2020 decreased by -1.82% when compared to its economic growth in 2019 (5.09%). This decline was caused by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which inhibited economic activity in the region and several countries worldwide. The number of MSEMs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the factors causing the decline in economic growth in districts/cities in West Kalimantan, including Pontianak City as the region's economic center. The economic shock Indonesia faced in 1997/1998 became a historical record for policymakers to pay attention

e-ISSN: 2976-2952/ @ 2023 SRN Intellectual Resources https://doi.org/10.56225/finbe.v2i1.146 to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) because they could contribute to the country's economic recovery. Based on data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, the number of MSMEs in Indonesia until May 2021 reached 64.2 million and contributed 61.07% or 8.6 trillion rupiah to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The contribution of MSMEs to the Indonesian economy includes its ability to absorb 97% of the total workforce and collect up to 60.4% of the total investment in the country. In Pontianak City, the large population is a big opportunity for business actors to develop and create new business opportunities. The increasing population density, mobility, and lifestyle changes provide opportunities for anyone who can take advantage of this condition for their small and medium-sized businesses (Berisha & Pula, 2015)

Table 1. Number of MSMEs in Pontianak City in 2020 (unit)

District/City	Number of SMEs					
District/City	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
West Kalimantan	108,374	119,396	80,546	178,540	181,453	
Sambas	8,438	9,215	4,838	16,325	16,446	
Bengkayang	1,505	2,105	936	5,210	5,305	
Landak	25,685	26,982	21,423	33,090	34,150	
Mempawah	10,688	11,460	7,526	16,420	16,619	
Sanggau	1,112	1,612	968	2,724	2,846	
Ketapang	3,975	5,030	1,352	8,150	8,304	
Sintang	11,565	12,425	7,327	16,550	16,630	
Kapuas Hulu	3,718	4,105	2,819	7,415	7,502	
Sekadau	2,846	3,207	2,114	5,415	5,557	
Melawi	1,015	1,615	910	3,715	3,820	
Kayong Utara	2,565	2,985	1,147	7,052	7,197	
Kubu Raya	3,485	4,625	1,834	8,771	8,882	
Pontianak City	27,382	28,650	24,437	38,705	38,886	
Singkawang City	4,395	5,380	2,915	8,998	9,309	

Source: Department of Cooperatives, Micro Enterprises and Trade, 2022

The existence of MSMEs in Pontianak City continued to grow until the COVID-19 pandemic caused many MSMEs to stop their activities. The second quarter of 2021, known as the post-pandemic period, has encouraged MSME actors to improve themselves to regain their place in Pontianak City's economy. Table 1 shows that Pontianak City has the largest number of MSMEs in West Kalimantan, followed by Landak District, Sintang District, and Mempawah District. Some MSMEs were forced to stop production during the pandemic, but some culinary MSMEs survived. These culinary MSMEs survived because the restrictions on mobility made it difficult for people to shop for kitchen ingredients, so they relied on ready-to-eat food products sold by various MSMEs that provide online ordering services. Thus, as people-based businesses, MSMEs have proven themselves resistant to various economic shocks and can grow during the economic crisis (Sarfiah et al., 2019)

Jhingan (2013) has stated that technology can increase production and encourage economic growth. This statement is in line with Todaro's opinion in ), which stated that technological progress is one of the important components in increasing economic growth. Technology can be in the form of innovation and creativity aimed at increasing production capacity in terms of quantity and quality. MSMEs need this input to create a differentiator from their competitors, especially in the culinary field.

Table 2. MSMEs in the Culina	ry Sector in Pontianak City	in 2021
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No	Sub-district	Unit of Measurement	Amount
1	West Pontianak	Unit	146
2	Pontianak City	Unit	126
3	South Pontianak	Unit	124
4	Southeast Pontianak	Unit	102
5	East Pontianak	Unit	173
6	North Pontianak	Unit	151
TOT	AL		822

Source: Department of Cooperatives, Micro Enterprises and Trade, 2022

Table 2 indicates 822 culinary MSMEs in Pontianak City spread over six sub-districts. Most culinary SMEs are in East Pontianak, North Pontianak, and Pontianak City. These three sub-districts have high population densities, which provides MSME actors with plenty of opportunities to run their businesses in these regions. Additionally, the existence of MSMEs in Pontianak City benefits the local government and the community's economy, especially in meeting food consumption needs, considering that household consumption is still the largest contributor to increasing national income.

The researchers of this study conducted an initial survey of several prospective respondents to determine the response of culinary SMEs to the COVID-19 pandemic and the period after various restrictions were stopped. The pandemic outbreak caused most MSMEs to experience a decline in turnover of more than 30%. Many MSMEs could not pay off their loans and pay electricity, gas, and their employee's salaries. Some of them even had to terminate (Pemutusan Hubungan Kerja or PHK) their employees. Changes in the consumption pattern of public goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic from offline to online also affected the existence of MSMEs during this period. Another obstacle experienced by MSMEs is the difficulty of obtaining raw materials, capital, declining customers, distribution, and production.

The decline in sales experienced by MSMEs was due to the decrease in income of the community during COVID-19. The pandemic caused the public to be more careful in managing their spending, which resulted in a decrease in the purchase of food and beverage products sold by MSMEs. Therefore, MSME actors tried to increase public interest by marketing their products online on social media. The initial survey found that the average income of MSME business actors before the pandemic was 11.7 million rupiah. Meanwhile, the average income during the pandemic is 10.25 million rupiah. During the pandemic, on average, MSMEs experienced a decrease in the total income of 1.5 million rupiah or 12.77% of their income before the pandemic.

Previous research in several cities has shown that to overcome the impacts caused by the pandemic, MSME actors must increase their innovation and creativity for the survivability of their businesses. Creativity is a process that requires the balance and application of the three essential aspects: analytics, creativity, and practical intelligence (Makmur, 2015). The balanced combination of these aspects will give birth to success. Creativity is also related to the creative individuals who involve themselves in the creative process and support from the environment of the producers of creative goods. On the other hand, innovation can be interpreted as an idea, item, event, or method that is felt or observed as something new for a person or group of people in society. It could result from an invention or discovery (Kusnandi, 2017). Innovation is a novel tool, thing, or idea that has never existed before, and its creation is expected to be interesting and valuable (Widianti, 2016). Something innovative not only gives birth to something new but must be helpful for the innovator or other people.

From the initial survey, Kuznets theory, and research results in general, the researchers of this study wanted to investigate what innovation and creativity were performed by MSME business actors in Pontianak City. The author aims to explore the innovations made by MSME business actors to maintain their business during the COVID-19 pandemic and the creativity of MSME business actors in making innovations to adapt their business to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 2. Literature Review

Kuznets' theory (Jhingan, 2013) about the importance of technology to increase production output is supported by the opinion of Todaro (Oktari, 2017), which involves technological progress as the main component in achieving high and solid economic growth, along with capital accumulation and population growth. In capital accumulation, the greater the business' capital, the better the innovation and creativity, and the better the business actors can perform. Population growth also affects the selling power of businesses. The higher the population, the greater the opportunity for a business to obtain more consumers. Moreover, technological advances support the running of a business, especially in the current era. With the advancement of technology, a business's production, promotion, and other processes will become easier.

### 2.1. The Concept of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, Innovation, and Creativity

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are productive business entities in all economic sectors that stand on their owners' strength (Tambunan, 2012). In Indonesia, the criteria for MSMEs are regulated based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2008 concerning Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. Innovation is a specific tool for companies that explores or takes advantage of the changes that occur as an opportunity to run a different business (Drucker, 2012). In general, innovation aims to create conditions that can encourage the development of the business sector. According to Makmur (2015), the purpose of innovation is based on 4 points of view: budget, customers, internal business processing, and growth or expansion of business fields.

Creativity is an ability possessed by a person to produce something new in solving the problem at hand. Furthermore, this novel finding can be in the form of objects, ideas, models, strategies, and so on that are useful/valuable for themselves and others (Ismaniar & Hazizah, 2018). The methods of measuring creativity include an objective analysis of creative behavior, subjective considerations, personality inventories, biographical inventories, and creativity tests. To be a creative individual, one should be able to think smoothly and freely and come up with original ideas obtained from within one's mind. Creative thinking also requires a person to have many ideas. In other words, for someone to think creatively, one must be open and flexible in expressing ideas.

Rosmadi (2021) discussed the steps taken by MSME actors in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in Bandung Regency. The results show that with the pandemic, there has been a decrease in sales caused by limited capital owned by business actors. Business owners would then look for solutions by changing packaging, product logos, making price adjustments, and giving discounts for purchases of certain quantities. These changes had a positive impact on the growth of MSMEs in Bandung Regency in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several culinary MSME businesses that are common and popular in the Jakarta area have also taken various strategies in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies include analyzing the external and internal business environment, the strategic planning of implementation stages, and conducting evaluations of MSME conditions during the pandemic. The MSME actors in Jakarta also innovated their frozen product variations to improve their product's hygiene and packaging. Regarding human resources, the business owner also doubles as an employee conducting all operational activities with other employees. Regarding the price of culinary products offered, MSMEs stated that they did not increase or decrease prices during the pandemic. In terms of marketing promotion, MSMEs used online business marketing strategies and product promotion strategies. Online marketing involves social media and online service applications that are helpful for consumers and MSMEs themselves. Online marketing strategies have caused a rapid increase in sales and product awareness during the pandemic (Kusumaningrum et al., 2021).

The development of digital-based MSMEs is a method to save the MSME sector in Central Java during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many MSMEs experienced a decline in sales and capital, distribution issues, difficulties in raw material procurement, decreased production, and increased layoffs, which later threatened the national economy. To overcome these issues, a digital entrepreneurship model for MSMEs that encourages innovations is needed to create a new MSME ecosystem that can increase the productivity and welfare of the Indonesian people (Hanim et al., 2021).

In line with the research results of Kusumaningrum et al. (2021) and Alfin (2021) analyzed the strategies of MSMEs in Indonesia in facing the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. His research provided various strategies business actors can implement, including selling their products online, employing digital marketing strategies, improving product and service quality, and establishing customer marketing relationships. The studies above discussed strategies, the role of innovation, and the steps that MSME business actors take in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, researchers emphasize the innovation and creativity conducted by MSME business actors in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain their businesses.

#### 3. Materials and Methods

This descriptive research aims to explain the object of the research to make a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the facts and characteristics of the population of an area. The research was conducted in Pontianak City, West Kalimantan, and the scope of the research is the sub-districts in Pontianak City. The research was conducted in 2022, and the data used were sourced from data collected in 2020 and 2021. Primary and secondary data sources were used. The authors obtained primary data from 100 respondents who were considered capable of representing the existing population. The respondents are MSME actors in the culinary sector who had run their businesses since before the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions until the government declared the end of the restrictions. The authors obtained secondary data from the Department of Industry and Trade of West Kalimantan Province. The secondary data used in this study is data on the number of MSMEs in Pontianak City, which are categorized by sub-district. This study's population is culinary MSMEs in Pontianak City, with 822 MSMEs spread over 6 sub-districts. According to the Slovin formula, the number of samples should be 89, and a total of 100 respondents of culinary SMEs were obtained in this study.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Respondents' Income Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Before the pandemic, the income received by most MSMEs was in the range of 3 to 5 million rupiah, and this did not change during the pandemic. A higher number of respondents earned income in the 3 to 5 millions rupiah range during the pandemic (28 respondents) compared to before the pandemic (25 respondents). Moreover, the number of respondents with the lowest income range (500,000 – 1,000,000 rupiah) has decreased from 13 respondents before the pandemic to 9 respondents during the pandemic. This result indicates that MSME income has shifted to a higher income range. These changes show that sales have not decreased for culinary SMEs because some people who have not experienced a decrease in income continued their regular food consumption habits during the pandemic. The results also suggest that sales increased along with the gradual improvement of health and environmental conditions.

Table 3. Respondents' Income Before and During the Covid-19 Pandemic

	Period			
Income (in Rupiah)	Before the Pandemic		During the Pandemic	
, ,	Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage
500,000-1,000,000	13	13%	9	9%
1,000,000-2,000,000	23	23%	15	15%
2,000,000-3,000,000	22	22%	24	24%
3,000,000-5,000,000	25	25%	28	28%
Over 5,000,000	17	17%	24	24%
Total	100	100%	100	100%

MSMEs are community-based businesses, mostly owned by people with limited capital but a fairly high entrepreneurial spirit. Their businesses can improve by making product changes or improving their MSME management. Based on the respondents' answers regarding innovation and creativity during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was found that the increase in MSME income during the pandemic was caused by innovation and creativity. MSME actors conducted innovation and creativity to adjust their business to the pandemic conditions, thereby increasing their business income.

#### 4.2. Innovation of Culinary MSME business in Pontianak City

As the purpose of innovation is to create a condition that allows the business sector to further develop, based on the respondent's answers, the author can state that the concrete forms of innovation conducted by MSME actors are as follows:

#### 4.2.1. Innovation through online sales services

The social distancing policies imposed by the government have limited people's movement. People had difficulties carrying out daily activities such as working and shopping for necessities. This was a serious problem for the community. One solution that people can do to meet their daily needs is to use online sales services and online courier services. Online sales services allow people to buy the things they need from home. People only need to choose and order the goods they need in the application, and the courier will buy and deliver the goods to the consumer's house. From the seller's perspective, this provides an excellent opportunity for business actors, especially the culinary sector, to maintain their business when social distancing is implemented. By using online sales services as a marketing medium, besides being able to help the community to meet their daily needs without having to leave the house, MSME actors can also maintain and increase their sales level while still adhering to social restriction policies.

#### 4.2.2. Creating unique products

The COVID-19 pandemic has weakened people's purchasing power and caused people to be more selective when shopping. People will only buy products that can meet their daily needs. There are even people who lower the standard of their daily needs. Therefore, unique new food products will attract consumers' attention as they will feel curious about these unique products. Curiosity will encourage consumers to buy the product and increase business income. This idea was a huge opportunity during the pandemic. A unique new product can be a combination of two or more old products that have been marketed or a new product that the business has never produced. For example, a honey business that used to only sell fresh honey can innovate by selling toast products with the honey filling that they previously produced.

The toast product is something new for the business, and consumers of the business will be curious about the new toast product. Thus, consumers will be encouraged to buy the new toast product, increasing operating income.

#### 4.2.3. Changing product packaging and holding promotions

Product packaging acts as a container and wrapper for the product. It also protects the product from contamination from the outside environment and functions as a promotional medium. Product packaging would attract buyers to be interested in buying the product. Changes in product packaging can also meet the needs of the community. An example would be changing product packaging from single-use plastic wrap to plastic containers that can be reused for other needs. Thus, the product will have additional economic value because every part of the product can be used optimally. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people were more careful in managing their spending and tended to buy products with low prices but high quality to reduce their spending. Therefore, providing promotions in product sales is a strategic step to increase product sales during the pandemic. These product promotions can include adding product content, discounts on products with new packaging, and discounts if bought in large quantities. Promotions were also given to attract potential consumers and affect their initial purchase decision.

#### 4.2.4. Innovation in marketing strategy

Marketing strategies related to technology were conducted by more than just large companies, as MSMEs can also effectively do so. Innovation by using various applications allowed MSME actors to run their businesses more productively and efficiently. Business actors could use WhatsApp (WA) robots/WA Business to manage databases. MSME actors could also create product content to be shared through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram or directly join various marketplaces, such as Grab food, Shopee food, and Go food.

#### 4.2.5. Innovation in consumer facilities

The convenience aspects for consumers who shop in-person need to be considered, for example, by providing free internet facilities. Doing so will ensure that consumers get profitable and satisfactory benefits when shopping for a product. However, this innovation could only be conducted by some respondents because the costs required are quite large each month. Nevertheless, some MSMEs who have done it consider this very beneficial for their business.

#### 4.3. The Creativity of SMEs in Pontianak

Creativity is a complementary element of innovation. Innovations made with creativity will have a higher selling value, aesthetic value, and attractiveness. Creativity is an ability possessed by a person that enables them to produce or hold something new in solving the problem at hand. Furthermore, creative innovations can be in the form of objects, ideas, models, strategies, and so on that are useful or valuable for the business and others. Based on the collected questionnaire data, the innovations and creativity conducted by MSME actors during the pandemic are as follows:

#### 4.3.1. Adding herbal ingredients to the products sold

During the pandemic, herbal food and beverage products were in great demand from consumers. Herbal foods and drinks are made from natural ingredients that contain lots of nutrients that are beneficial for health. During the pandemic, people were increasingly aware of the importance of maintaining their health and immune system. Therefore, maintaining a diet by consuming healthy and nutritious food and drinks is one way for people to maintain their body health. Herbal foods and drinks can increase the consumer's immunity and maintain their health. MSME actors saw this opportunity and adapted their products to have health value. Business actors innovated their products by adding herbal ingredients to create a unique product that has efficacy for the health of the body. Business actors conduct several forms of innovation and creativity in making unique new products, such as making herbal teas from organic ingredients and processing foods using spices rich in nutrients.

#### 4.3.2. Creating new packaging

In addition to making new products, business actors also made new packaging. The simplest product packaging change is to add a sticker that states the name of the MSMEs and the type of product. However, MSME actors also made new packaging stickers that are more modern and creative to attract consumers' attention to buy their products. The creative changes to product packaging can also be in the form of changing the shape of the packaging itself into a more unique and creative form. For example, businesses that sell snack products that use ordinary plastic containers as product packaging can change their packaging into plastic containers that have a Ziplock to maintain product quality.

#### 4.3.3. Shop creation and arrangement of MSME products

MSME actors were creative in structuring their stores to create a commercial image. They arranged their stores to introduce new goods and increase profits. This is intended to make consumers more familiar with the product and increase their interest in making transactions. The more products are displayed and neatly arranged, the easier it is for consumers to make their choices. The store's arrangement is also important for attracting the attention of buyers and creating a desire to buy the product. The changes made at the shop provided many benefits for MSME actors because they could attract consumers by changing the paint color of the shop and adding accessories and decorations to attract more buyers.

#### 4.3.4. Updating their menu and product bundling

MSME actors were also creative in updating their menus of products that used to be sold individually to selling them per package (bundling). Product bundling is a marketing strategy by grouping several products together and then selling them as units at one price. This strategy aims to attract customers because it can make it easier for consumers to shop. Consumers would not need to go to other stores to make additional purchases of products that the respondent's shop did not previously provide. For example, culinary SMEs who initially only sold grilled chicken added package options to their menus that included adding rice, fresh vegetables, and drinks. In addition, the seller also added menus such as grilled fish, fried rice, and chicken noodles which are sold with a package system.

#### 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, innovation and creativity are needed by culinary SMEs in maintaining their business and continue to attract consumers' interest to maintain their choice of respondent SMEs. Efforts that have been made by respondent MSMEs on innovation, for example by using online sales services, making unique products, changing product packaging, and holding promotions. Other innovations are made in marketing strategies, and consumer facilities. The creativity that is carried out is: adding herbal ingredients in the products being sold, making new creations on packaging, creating shops, arranging MSME products, and updating menus and product bundling.

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