



Strategies for Developing Toasted Bread SMEs in the Face of Modern Culinary Competition

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Abstract

This study explores the development strategies employed by toast-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to remain competitive in the increasingly dynamic and competitive modern culinary market. The research focuses on several key aspects, including product innovation, enhancement of raw material quality, improvement of customer service, utilization of digital technology, and strengthening of local branding. Data were collected through literature review, market observation, and a qualitative descriptive approach, allowing an in-depth understanding of business practices and challenges faced by these enterprises. The findings indicate that toast-based MSMEs enhance their competitiveness through several strategies. Product innovation, such as flavor differentiation and creative menu offerings, allows businesses to cater to diverse consumer preferences. Improvements in product hygiene and ingredient quality further increase consumer trust and satisfaction. Additionally, digital marketing through social media platforms enables broader market reach and more effective engagement with customers. Collaboration with culinary communities and local influencers also strengthens brand visibility and customer loyalty. These strategies collectively contribute to expanded market share and sustainable growth despite the fast-changing food trends. The study provides practical insights and can serve as a reference for MSMEs seeking to implement adaptive, creative, and long-term development strategies in the modern culinary industry.

Keywords: *MSMEs Development Strategies, Product Innovation, Digital Marketing, Customer Loyalty*

Abstrak: Studi ini mengeksplorasi strategi pengembangan yang diterapkan oleh usaha mikro, kecil, dan menengah (UMKM) berbasis roti panggang untuk tetap kompetitif di pasar kuliner modern yang semakin dinamis dan kompetitif. Studi ini berfokus pada beberapa aspek kunci, termasuk inovasi produk, peningkatan kualitas bahan baku, peningkatan layanan pelanggan, pemanfaatan teknologi digital, dan penguatan merek lokal. Data dikumpulkan melalui tinjauan pustaka, observasi pasar, dan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, yang memungkinkan pemahaman mendalam tentang praktik bisnis dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh UMKM ini. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa UMKM berbasis roti panggang meningkatkan daya saing mereka melalui beberapa strategi. Inovasi produk, seperti diferensiasi rasa dan penawaran menu kreatif, memungkinkan bisnis untuk memenuhi berbagai preferensi konsumen. Peningkatan kebersihan produk dan kualitas bahan baku juga meningkatkan kepercayaan dan kepuasan konsumen. Lebih lanjut, pemasaran digital melalui platform media sosial memungkinkan jangkauan pasar yang lebih luas dan interaksi pelanggan yang lebih efektif. Kolaborasi dengan komunitas kuliner lokal dan influencer juga memperkuat visibilitas merek dan loyalitas pelanggan. Secara keseluruhan, strategi-strategi ini berkontribusi pada peningkatan pangsa pasar dan



pertumbuhan berkelanjutan meskipun tren kuliner terus berubah. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan praktis dan dapat berfungsi sebagai referensi bagi UMKM dalam menerapkan strategi pengembangan yang adaptif, kreatif, dan berkelanjutan di industri kuliner modern.

Kata Kunci: *Strategi Pengembangan UMKM, Inovasi Produk, Pemasaran Digital, Loyalitas Pelanggan*

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a key pillar of the national economy, playing a strategic role in employment, increasing public income, economic growth, and shaping socio-economic structures. MSMEs not only contribute to increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but also serve as a vehicle for innovation and creativity in presenting products relevant to community needs. In the culinary sector, MSMEs demonstrate rapid dynamics, marked by the emergence of a variety of new, creative and innovative foods, both in terms of taste, presentation, and marketing concepts. (Suarna et al., 2025)

One traditional culinary product that remains in demand and has undergone significant transformation is toast. Originally known as a simple food popular among urban communities and students, toast has now evolved into a high-value culinary product with strong branding potential. This product offers not only taste but also a consumption experience that can be tailored to modern consumer preferences. This development reflects the fact that even traditional products can be adapted to be relevant to modern culinary trends, especially for the younger generation, who are strongly influenced by visual aesthetics, quality ingredients, and innovation in taste and presentation.

However, amidst the rapid development of modern culinary trends, toast MSMEs face complex and multidimensional challenges. Competition now comes not only from fellow MSMEs but also from large culinary brands, modern coffee shops, food and beverage franchises, and fast food restaurants that employ aggressive marketing strategies and optimally utilize digital platforms. This forces MSMEs with limited capital and resources to think creatively and strategically to remain competitive. Furthermore, changes in modern consumer behavior also demand adaptation. Today's consumers are more selective in choosing food, paying attention to the quality of raw materials, nutritional value, aesthetic presentation, and flexibility of online ordering services. Furthermore, consumers increasingly prioritize the overall culinary experience, from taste and appearance to service and ease of product access through digital platforms. (Salma Rahmi Ramadhani Putri & Yudas Tadius Andi Candra, 2024)

In this context, a systematic, adaptive, and innovative development strategy is needed for toast-based MSMEs to maintain business sustainability

and increase competitiveness. This development strategy can encompass various aspects, such as flavor innovation and menu variations to appeal to various consumer segments, improving service quality, using attractive and practical packaging, and leveraging digital technology. Online ordering platforms like GoFood, GrabFood, or ShopeeFood, as well as social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, are important tools for reaching a wider consumer base, building two-way interactions, and increasing product awareness. Strengthening brand identity is also crucial for creating a distinct positioning compared to competitors, while emphasizing the unique value and authenticity of the product.

Furthermore, marketing and product development strategies must be implemented holistically, combining content innovation, creative promotions, customer engagement, and monitoring the latest culinary trends. This approach not only increases the appeal of new customers but also strengthens the loyalty of existing customers through a consistent and satisfying experience. Innovations can include developing new menu items, varying spice levels, portion sizes, practical packaging for delivery, and storytelling strategies that emphasize the uniqueness and tradition of the product.

This study was conducted to identify effective development strategies for toast-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) amidst the dynamic competition of the modern culinary industry. Through an analytical approach to field business practices and a literature review related to MSME development and culinary marketing, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of innovation practices, digital adaptation, and marketing strategies that can enhance competitiveness. It is hoped that the results of this study will not only be useful for business actors as a guide in designing innovative and sustainable business models but also serve as an academic reference for studies on MSME development in the ever-growing and increasingly competitive culinary sector. (Khansa Islami et al., 2023)

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, aiming to provide an in-depth overview of the development strategies of toast-based MSMEs in the face of modern culinary competition. A qualitative approach was chosen because it captures social realities, MSME actors' perceptions, and market dynamics in a natural and contextual manner (Moleong, 2017).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through informal and semi-structured interviews with toast SMEs, consumers, and stakeholders in the local culinary business chain. Meanwhile, secondary data came from scientific journals, SME management books, culinary business articles, data on modern food trends,

and relevant publications on marketing and strategic management (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data collection techniques included direct observation of toast business activities, documentation of the business's social media accounts, sales records, and interactive interviews to gain in-depth perspectives from business owners. These observations focused on operational conditions during business hours and analyzed customer interactions.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis principles, which include systematic data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process was conducted iteratively to capture patterns, relationships between variables, and strategic development themes used by toast-based MSMEs in facing modern culinary competition. (Muhammad Randicha Hamandia et al., 2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Competition in the Modern Culinary Industry

Competition in the culinary sector is currently showing increasing intensity, along with changing consumer consumption patterns and the emergence of viral food trends amplified by the influence of social media. Toast MSMEs, as one of the small businesses in the culinary sector, face complex challenges because they must compete not only with other MSMEs but also with large culinary brands that have stronger promotional capabilities, professional human resources, and significant capital support. The presence of food and beverage franchises, modern coffee shops, and fast food restaurants adds to the competitive dynamics by offering more aggressive, innovative, and digital-friendly marketing concepts. (Eka et al., 2021)

In this context, toasted bread MSMEs are required to maintain the relevance of their products amidst intense competition. Modern consumers are no longer simply looking for filling products, but also pay attention to the quality of ingredients, aesthetic presentation, and the overall culinary experience. Product aesthetics, attractive packaging, and innovative flavors are important factors influencing purchasing decisions. Furthermore, speed of service, ease of access through digital platforms, and personalized experiences in interacting with products are also key considerations for consumers. This change in consumer behavior aligns with the concept of consumer behavior explained by Kotler & Keller (2016), which states that purchasing decisions are influenced by psychological and social factors, as well as the aesthetic value offered by a product.

Social media plays a highly strategic role in shaping consumer perceptions and influencing consumption patterns. Viral food trends, culinary challenges, and user reviews on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube can boost product visibility quickly. Toast-based MSMEs that leverage these platforms with creative and consistent content have a greater

opportunity to reach new audiences, attract younger generations, and build brand awareness. However, the intensity of digital competition also demands that MSMEs remain adaptive, keep up with trends, and maintain product quality to remain competitive.

Furthermore, modern consumers increasingly demand transparency and consistent quality. This includes the use of fresh ingredients, hygiene in production processes, and fast and friendly service. Large brands have a competitive advantage in this area due to their ability to implement strict operational standards and integrated quality control systems. Toast-producing MSMEs must balance maintaining the product's traditional characteristics and meeting the expectations of modern consumers who demand innovation. This strategy requires creativity, operational efficiency, and the use of digital technology to support promotions, sales, and customer interactions.

Competition also impacts pricing and positioning strategies. Consumers now have more choices, so MSMEs must be careful in setting competitive prices without sacrificing quality. Product differentiation strategies, such as flavor variations, spiciness levels, portion sizes, practical packaging, and menu innovations, are key factors in attracting consumers and creating added value that is difficult for competitors to imitate. Collaboration with culinary communities, local influencers, and digital delivery platforms can also strengthen MSMEs' position in a competitive market. (Sahro et al., 2025)

Product Innovation as a Differentiation Strategy

Product innovation is one of the main strategies implemented by toast-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to differentiate themselves in the increasingly competitive culinary market. In this highly competitive environment, product homogeneity poses a significant challenge for MSMEs. Many toast-based stalls offer similar concepts, leaving consumers with numerous choices of relatively comparable quality. Therefore, MSMEs that are able to innovate their products will have a competitive advantage, both in terms of taste, appearance, and consumer experience.

One common form of innovation is enriching the toppings or fillings on toast. MSMEs now offer toast not only with standard chocolate and cheese, but have also begun developing premium toppings such as fruit jams, roasted nuts, artisan chocolate spreads, and unique flavor combinations like dark chocolate with sea salt or caramel butter. This approach not only provides consumers with a new taste experience but also strengthens the brand's image as creative and innovative. With unique topping variations, consumers feel they have more personalized choices, increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases. (Rahman, 2024)

In addition to toppings, improving the quality of raw materials is a key focus in product innovation. Toast MSMEs are starting to use high-quality ingredients, such as premium butter, fresh eggs, and bread with a soft texture and distinctive aroma. Improving the quality of raw materials not only impacts taste but also builds positive brand perception. Modern consumers are increasingly concerned about the quality of the food they consume, including nutritional content, hygiene, and food safety. By providing quality raw materials, MSMEs are able to meet consumer expectations and increase trust in their products, which in turn strengthens customer loyalty.

Innovation is also implemented through the development of new menu variants that align with culinary trends and market preferences. Some MSMEs create seasonal or limited-edition menus, for example, toast with seasonal toppings like dragon fruit and mango, or special Eid and Christmas editions. This strategy creates a sense of exclusivity and encourages consumers to try the product for a limited time, creating a sense of urgency and increasing purchase frequency. These unique menu variants also create engaging content for social media, which can increase engagement and expand brand reach through the viral effect.

In addition to taste and ingredients, innovation is also carried out in the visual aspects of the product and presentation. The aesthetic appearance of toast, the use of attractive packaging, and Instagrammable presentation are part of the differentiation strategy. This model aligns with the principle of innovation in product marketing according to Alma (2018), which states that product creativity can increase competitive value in a saturated market. By presenting products that are not only delicious but also visually appealing, MSMEs are able to create a positive impression on consumers, encourage them to share their experiences on social media, and indirectly expand brand visibility.

Product innovation must also be accompanied by systematic management. Each new variant typically goes through a pilot testing phase to gather consumer feedback before becoming a permanent menu item. This approach minimizes the risk of product failure and ensures that the innovations implemented truly add value. Through continuous product iteration, MSMEs can adapt innovations to changing trends and consumer preferences, maintaining long-term brand relevance. (Soamole et al., 2025)

Service Quality and Customer Experience

Besides product innovation, service quality is a key factor in determining the success of toasted bread MSMEs in building customer loyalty. Good service encompasses not only speed and accuracy in serving customers, but also warm, friendly, and attentive interactions. These positive interactions create a profound emotional experience for consumers, which in turn encourages repeat purchases. In the context of consumer psychology, this

emotional experience significantly influences repeat purchase decisions and customer satisfaction levels. Modern consumers, especially millennials and Gen Z, tend to value the overall experience, not just the taste of the product.

Consistency in taste and product quality are also crucial factors in retaining loyal customers. While innovative flavors and menu variations are crucial for attracting new customers, existing customers still demand consistent product quality. MSMEs that maintain consistency in the taste, texture, and appearance of their toasted bread can build long-term trust. This trust becomes invaluable social capital, as satisfied customers tend to recommend the product to others, both directly and through social media, which serves as an effective organic promotional channel. (Krisna Agung et al., 2024)

Product packaging also plays a crucial role in the perception of quality and professionalism of MSMEs. Attractive, hygienic, and practical packaging not only maintains product quality, such as the crispiness of the bread and the freshness of the toppings, but also reflects the business's professional image. In the era of increasingly dominant online transactions, packaging is a crucial element because consumers' first impressions of a product are strongly influenced by the condition of the product upon receipt. Neat and secure packaging can increase customer satisfaction, reduce complaints, and strengthen the brand image as a serious and trustworthy business. This aligns with Tambunan's (2019) recommendation, which states that MSMEs that display operational professionalism tend to be more competitive, especially in markets that demand high quality and experience.

Beyond the physical aspect, the customer experience also encompasses personalized service and responsiveness to customer requests. For example, an MSME's ability to accommodate custom orders, adjust spice levels, or accommodate specific topping preferences conveys the impression that the company listens to and values customer needs. This approach not only increases satisfaction but also strengthens the emotional bond between consumers and the brand. Responsive service, including responding to complaints or questions via social media or online messaging platforms, demonstrates professionalism and attention that can differentiate a toast-based MSME from larger competitors and more generic stalls.

Improving service quality also impacts the formation of long-term loyalty. Customer loyalty is not solely created by a delicious product, but through a comprehensive experience that combines product quality, service, and positive interactions. Consumers who feel satisfied with the overall experience are more likely to make repeat purchases, provide positive reviews, and become voluntary brand ambassadors. From a modern marketing perspective, this strategy is known as experiential marketing, where consumer experience is at the core of business differentiation and

competitiveness. (Arief Eko Prasetyo, Dr. Banu Witono, SE, M.Sc., Ak., CA & Ekonomi, 2019)

Utilization of Digital Technology and Online Platforms

Lit In today's modern era, adapting to digital technology is a crucial factor in maintaining the competitiveness of MSMEs, including in the culinary sector, such as toast. MSMEs that are able to effectively utilize digital technology have a greater opportunity to reach new consumers, increase customer loyalty, and optimize product promotion. One key form of utilization is through social media, such as TikTok and Instagram, which serve not only as promotional channels but also as interactive platforms for building two-way communication with customers. Visual content in the form of high-quality photos, bread-making videos, and other creative content allows MSMEs to showcase the unique value of their products while captivating consumers through engaging digital experiences. (Rosari, 2025)

Engaging with consumers through social media offers significant strategic advantages. Modern consumers, particularly millennials and Gen Z, demand personalized and responsive interactions from brands. With comments, direct messages, and interactive polling features, MSMEs can respond quickly to questions, criticism, or feedback, creating a closer and more emotional connection between consumers and brands. This approach not only increases customer satisfaction but also fosters long-term loyalty because consumers feel cared for and appreciated. Digital marketing theory proposed by Kotler & Keller (2016) emphasizes the importance of digital intimacy between brands and consumers as one of the keys to building sustainable relationships, which is relevant in the context of modern toast MSMEs.

In addition to social media, integration with delivery service platforms like GoFood, GrabFood, and similar apps plays a crucial role in facilitating consumer access to products. Urban consumers tend to prioritize convenience when purchasing food, and the availability of online delivery services allows them to order toast anytime without having to go to the store. This increases transaction frequency and expands the reach of MSMEs to previously hard-to-reach areas, including busy consumers, students, and office workers. Furthermore, the use of these digital platforms allows for the collection of consumer behavioral data, such as menu preferences, ordering times, and delivery locations, which can then be analyzed to optimize offering strategies, promotions, and new product development. (Ashari et al., 2024)

Digital content also plays a role in building brand image and enhancing the product's visual appeal. MSMEs can showcase the hygienic, creative, and professional process of making toast, while highlighting the unique toppings and menu variations offered. This type of content is easily shared by consumers on social media, creating a viral effect that indirectly increases brand awareness. Furthermore, digital campaigns can be tailored to popular

trends, such as the use of viral hashtags, challenges, or seasonal promotions, thereby increasing the content's relevance and engagement with the target audience.

The use of digital technology also enables MSMEs to conduct promotions more efficiently and measurably than conventional methods. Paid advertising on social media can be specifically targeted based on demographics, location, interests, or consumer behavior, allowing marketing budgets to be used more effectively. Monitoring digital performance metrics, such as impressions, clicks, engagement, and sales conversions, allows MSMEs to evaluate campaign effectiveness in real time and make quick adjustments based on analysis. (Muh Fajrul & Riska Fita Saptiyana, 2025)

Local Community Collaboration and Networking

The toast-based MSME model faces the challenge of increasingly fierce competition in the modern culinary sector, where consumers are not only looking for delicious and high-quality products but also appreciate local values, authenticity, and the social experience inherent in the product. In this context, collaboration strategies and leveraging local community networks are an effective approach for MSMEs to increase market penetration and strengthen their competitive position. A community-based approach allows MSMEs not only to sell products but also to build a brand identity that is authentic, relevant, and connected to the social values of the local community.

One way to implement this strategy is through collaboration with other MSMEs operating in the culinary sector, particularly local beverages. For example, toast can be bundled with coffee, tea, or regional fermented beverages. This strategy adds value to consumers, as they gain a more comprehensive and convenient culinary experience in a single transaction. Furthermore, such collaborations broaden the exposure of toast products to the partner's customer base, enabling faster market penetration than individual promotions. This approach also builds positive associations between the product and the local community, reinforcing the perception that the toast is part of the local culinary ecosystem that supports local businesses. (Lontar et al., 2022)

In addition to collaboration between MSMEs, community networks are also expanded through collaborations with food bloggers, local influencers, and culinary community social media platforms. Food bloggers have a loyal following and tend to place high trust in culinary recommendations from the figures they follow. By leveraging these digital platforms and networks, toast-based MSMEs can significantly increase product visibility and build brand credibility. Blogger-created content, such as reviews, photos, and unboxing videos, not only increases awareness but also encourages social interaction and word-of-mouth marketing, one of the most effective marketing mechanisms in the digital age.

Local community strategies are also realized through active participation in culinary events, bazaars, food festivals, and social activities in operational areas. Attending these events provides opportunities for MSMEs to interact directly with consumers, receive real-time feedback, and build strong emotional connections. The social experiences created through these interactions increase consumer loyalty, as they feel involved in a community that supports local products. This aligns with Nawawi's (2012) perspective, which emphasizes that social networks and collective relationships are crucial assets in developing community-based businesses.

This collaborative approach also has a positive impact on digital marketing strategies. Products reviewed or promoted through local community networks tend to be more readily accepted by digital audiences, as endorsements are made by figures perceived as having local credibility. MSMEs that actively network with local communities can leverage offline interactions to support online engagement, creating synergy between conventional promotions and digital marketing. This combination enables broader market penetration, from local consumers to more trend-oriented urban audiences, and increases the likelihood of repeat purchases. (Azary et al., 2022)

Obstacles and Challenges to MSME Development

Although Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the toast sector have significant growth potential, they still face a variety of complex and interconnected obstacles. One of the main obstacles frequently encountered is limited capital. Many MSMEs still rely on personal capital or small loans, limiting their ability to make strategic investments—such as purchasing modern equipment, product innovation, marketing promotion, and human resource development. Capital constraints directly limit production capacity and product quality, making it difficult for MSMEs to compete with larger culinary brands that have stronger financial backing and the ability to expand their markets more rapidly.

Besides capital, limited business management knowledge is also a significant obstacle. Many MSMEs focus more on day-to-day operations, such as material processing, production, and sales without long-term strategic planning. This lack of planning encompasses financial management, inventory management, marketing strategy, business performance evaluation, and product development planning. This limited knowledge makes MSMEs vulnerable to operational risks and poor decision-making, and reduces their ability to adapt to dynamic market changes. Sugiyono (2019) emphasized that the quality of business management is a key factor determining the growth and competitiveness of MSMEs in facing the challenges of the modern market. MSMEs with poorly structured management tend to stagnate and struggle to expand their markets or sustainably increase profitability.

Adaptability to digital technology is another critical challenge. In the modern era, digitalization has become a crucial element in culinary business development, encompassing digital marketing, online delivery platforms, social media, and electronic payment systems. However, not all toast-based MSMEs have adequate digital literacy or access to relevant technology. As a result, potential market reach is limited, product promotion is suboptimal, and interaction with consumers is hampered. especially the millennial and urban generations who prioritize speed and ease of service cannot be implemented effectively. This technological gap creates a gap between traditional MSMEs and modern culinary brands that have fully adopted digitalization.

Another external factor hampering the development of toast-producing MSMEs is the fluctuation in raw material prices. Prices of eggs, bread, butter, and other ingredients often fluctuate significantly due to seasonal factors, government policies, or global market conditions. Rising raw material prices impact profit margins and make it difficult for MSMEs to maintain competitive prices for consumers. Some MSMEs attempt to address this by seeking alternative suppliers or stockpiling raw materials, but these strategies are limited by capital capacity and the risk of material damage.

Furthermore, limited marketing access is also a significant obstacle. Many toast-based MSMEs still rely on brick-and-mortar sales, limiting market growth. To expand their reach, promotion through digital media and online delivery platforms is necessary, but this requires additional costs, an understanding of content strategy, and the ability to interact effectively with consumers. Without integrated offline and online marketing strategies, MSMEs struggle to compete with larger brands that have integrated, data-driven marketing strategies and are able to adapt to consumer trends in real time.

Beyond internal factors, external pressures from industry competition also pose significant challenges. MSMEs must compete with major brands, franchises, modern coffee shops, and fast-food restaurants that offer similar products with more aggressive marketing concepts, broader distribution, and faster product innovation. Modern consumers are increasingly selective, prioritizing taste, product appearance, the purchasing experience, and brand image and reputation. This requires MSMEs not only to maintain product quality but also to create added value and clear differentiation to attract customers. (Putri et al., 2025)

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that toasted bread MSMEs have significant potential to thrive amidst modern culinary competition if they can implement the right development strategies. Fierce competition demands that MSMEs rely not only on superior taste but also on adapting to culinary trends, improving product quality, and strengthening

brand identity. Product innovation, both in terms of menu variety and visual appearance, has proven to be a crucial factor in attracting modern consumers, who tend to be influenced by aesthetics and the virality of digital content. Furthermore, service quality and customer experience are crucial for maintaining customer loyalty and enhancing a business's image. With professional and consistent service, MSMEs are able to build personal relationships with consumers. Utilizing digital technologies such as social media and online ordering platforms is an effective strategy for expanding market reach and increasing product accessibility. MSMEs that consistently engage in digital promotions and interactive communication with consumers are able to build sustainable brand awareness. Furthermore, collaboration with local communities and social networks provides broader marketing opportunities and strengthens MSMEs' presence within the local business ecosystem.

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