



Analysis of the Dimsum Production Process in Culinary MSMEs in Medan City, Indonesia

Muhammad Ibrahim Nasution,¹ Nurhaliza Hasanah,² Muhammad Alfi Raifan³

¹²³Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

Email: Mhd.ibrahim277@gmail.com, Nurhalizahasanah21@gmail.com,
Mhd.Raifan9@gmail.com

Abstract

Culinary MSMEs have a significant contribution to regional economic growth, particularly in Medan, a city recognized for its rich culinary diversity. One product that continues to experience increasing market demand is dim sum. This study aims to analyze the dim sum production system within culinary MSMEs in Medan, focusing on production stages, availability and management of raw materials, the utilization of technology, and obstacles faced during production activities. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach conducted on one MSME that consistently produces dim sum. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews with the business owner, and documentation of production activities. The results reveal that production is still performed semi-manually and lacks structured operational standards, leading to inconsistent product quality and unstable production capacity. Key challenges identified include limited capital, fluctuating raw material prices, and insufficient technical skills among workers. Based on these findings, this study recommends implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), adopting appropriate processing technology, and improving inventory management to enhance production efficiency and competitiveness among culinary MSMEs.

Keywords: *Production Process; Culinary MSME; Dimsum; Medan City*

Abstrak: UMKM kuliner (UMKM) memiliki kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap pertumbuhan ekonomi daerah, khususnya di Medan yang dikenal dengan keragaman kulinernya. Salah satu produk yang mengalami peningkatan permintaan pasar adalah Dimsum. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sistem produksi dim sum pada UMKM kuliner di Medan, dengan fokus pada tahapan produksi, ketersediaan dan pengelolaan bahan baku, pemanfaatan teknologi, dan kendala yang dihadapi selama proses produksi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan studi kasus pada satu UMKM yang rutin menghasilkan dim sum. Pendataan dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan pemilik usaha, dan dokumentasi kegiatan produksi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses produksi masih dilakukan secara semi manual dan tidak memiliki prosedur operasi standar yang terstruktur, yang berdampak pada kualitas produk dan stabilitas kapasitas produksi. Tantangan utama yang diidentifikasi termasuk modal terbatas, fluktuasi harga bahan baku, dan keterampilan teknis pekerja yang terbatas. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, penelitian ini merekomendasikan penerapan Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), adopsi teknologi pengolahan yang tepat guna, dan peningkatan manajemen persediaan bahan baku untuk meningkatkan efisiensi produksi dan daya saing UMKM kuliner.

Kata Kunci: *Proses Produksi, UMKM Kuliner, Dimsum Kota Medan*



INTRODUCTION

The culinary MSME sector is a business sector that significantly contributes to the regional economy. MSMEs not only play a role in providing products and services to the community but also create jobs, increase incomes, and stimulate local economic activity. In Medan, the culinary sector holds a strong position due to its cultural diversity and the community's penchant for exploring diverse cuisines. The presence of various food centers, night markets, and online food ordering platforms expands business opportunities and facilitates the growth and recognition of culinary businesses .

One type of food that has become increasingly popular in recent years is dim sum. Initially known as a typical Chinese dish, dim sum has undergone adjustments in taste, appearance, and ingredients over time to better suit local consumer preferences. Various innovations such as the use of stronger spices and variations of fillings such as chicken, mozzarella, shrimp, and even mentai sauce have made dim sum a popular modern snack, especially among young people and users of food delivery services. This trend has led to a growing number of MSMEs seeing dim sum as a promising business opportunity and have begun producing it as a main menu or complement to their culinary businesses .

However, this increase in demand is not always accompanied by improvements in production management quality. Many MSMEs still rely on traditional manual production methods, such as simple steaming processes, inconsistent ingredient measurements, and minimal documentation of raw material usage. This condition tends to lead to unstable product quality, especially when production volumes increase significantly. Uneven taste, texture, and product shape are challenges often faced by business owners. Furthermore, limited capital also hinders the use of more modern and efficient production technology and equipment . (Borobudur & Borobudur, 2026)

In the highly competitive Medan culinary market, MSMEs are required to prioritize not only taste but also manage the production process more professionally. Aspects such as raw material management, production schedule planning, storage systems, product packaging, and quality maintenance are crucial for business survival and growth. This challenge is compounded when sales are conducted through digital platforms, which require speed of service, consistent quality, and product durability during distribution. (Muhammad Hafizh Ramadhan Siregar, Muhammad Rafli Siregar, Rio Prabowo, 2025)

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative descriptive method, which aims to directly describe and explain the dim sum production process based on real-world conditions. This method was chosen because the research not only examines the final product but also understands the workflow, material

management, equipment use, and any obstacles encountered during production. This approach allows researchers to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the production activities carried out by business actors.

The research was conducted at a culinary micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) in Medan that regularly produces dim sum. This location was chosen purposively because the MSME is growing, has daily production activities, and is relevant to the research theme. The study subjects consisted of the business owner and one or two workers directly involved in the production process.

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations included direct observation of the work stages, from raw material selection and dough processing to dim sum formation, steaming, and packaging. Interviews were conducted to obtain information about the business background, considerations for material selection, reasons for using specific production methods, and any operational challenges. Documentation, including photos of the production process, raw material purchase records, and evidence of sales activity, were used to support the data.

The collected data was analyzed by summarizing relevant information, presenting it descriptively, and then drawing conclusions regarding the production process conditions and influencing factors. To ensure the reliability of the data obtained, researchers checked the data by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the information presented remained consistent. (Hanifah & Raharja, 2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at the Dimsum Harum Rasa MSME, located in Medan City, which produces and sells ready-to-eat and frozen dim sum. The business is run independently by the owner with the support of several family members. Production is carried out daily, with quantities adjusted to market demand. Based on direct observations at the production site, interviews with the business owner, and documentation of production activities, a comprehensive overview of the ongoing production process, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors, was obtained. (Gunawan et al., 2024)

Raw Material Procurement and Inventory System

The main raw materials in the dim sum production process at this MSME consist of fresh chicken, dim sum skins (wonton wrappers), starch, eggs, and various additional ingredients such as salt, garlic, pepper, soy sauce, sesame oil, and seasonings. In addition, there are supporting materials such as plastic packaging, paper cups, and product labels used in the final packaging process. All raw materials are obtained from suppliers at the Sei Sikambing traditional market, which has been the main source of supply for the MSME since its inception. The owner chose to collaborate with a well-known supplier

because it is considered more flexible in terms of purchase quantities and price negotiations, compared to buying through modern wholesalers or large distributors.

Although the supply system operates fairly stably, research findings indicate that the raw material inventory system remains rudimentary and lacks a structured needs calculation. Purchasing decisions are made using a manual forecasting approach based on previous experience, without the use of documented historical data. Business owners tend to purchase raw materials in small quantities to maintain product freshness, particularly chicken meat and dim sum skins, which have a relatively short shelf life. This practice is considered beneficial in maintaining taste quality, but has implications for cost efficiency and consistent ingredient availability.

Purchasing ingredients on a daily basis makes business owners highly dependent on market conditions. When the price of certain commodities, particularly chicken, increases, production costs also rise. However, business owners often hesitate to adjust selling prices immediately, fearing it will reduce customer demand. This situation indicates that cost control mechanisms are not functioning optimally. One reason is the lack of a standard Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) calculation system to monitor changes in raw material costs against profit margins.

Furthermore, the lack of systematic inventory records also hampers the production process. Business owners rely solely on memory to monitor inventory, making it difficult to predict material needs when demand increases significantly. This is especially true on weekends, national holidays, or when there is an increase in orders through food delivery apps. When inventory suddenly becomes insufficient, businesses are forced to halt production or reject orders, which can ultimately reduce customer satisfaction and hinder sales growth opportunities.

Given these conditions, raw material management in MSMEs can be categorized as still at the basic operational stage, not yet reaching the level of planned inventory management. Ideally, a simple inventory system such as the FIFO (First In First Out) method, recording daily usage, and calculating minimum stock levels should be implemented. Furthermore, the use of simple technology, such as inventory applications on smartphones, can help simplify inventory monitoring. (Kusumaningrum et al., 2021)

Dough Mixing and Processing Stage

The dough-mixing stage is one of the core processes in dim sum production, as it determines the flavor, texture, and quality of the final product. This process begins with the cleaning of the main ingredient, fresh chicken. The meat is first separated from the bones, cleaned of excess fat, and then washed under running water for hygiene. The meat is then cut into small pieces to facilitate the grinding process.

The meat grinding process uses a household grinder, which has limited capacity. While this tool is relatively effective for small-scale production, the process time increases with increasing orders or when producing large quantities. Once the meat is ground to a fine texture, the next step is to mix the spices and other supporting ingredients.

Additional ingredients used include ground garlic, salt, ground pepper, sesame oil, soy sauce, eggs, and tapioca flour to give the dough its elasticity. All ingredients are mixed by hand without using a mixer or automatic food processor. This method is chosen because it provides better control over the dough's texture and aligns with the business owner's practice since they first started producing dim sum.

However, observations revealed that the ingredient measurement system still relies on the business owner's experience, rather than standard measurements like grams or liters. Business owners determine measurements through a trial-based decision-making method, which involves tasting and assessing flavors directly during the mixing process. While this technique provides unique flavors by following the maker's intuition, it is less than ideal for repetitive production, which requires consistency.

Reliance on the business owner's skills and intuition means that product quality is highly dependent on who prepares the dough. When the process is handled by other workers, there is a risk that the taste, texture, and aroma will not meet the expected standards. This indicates a skills gap and dependence on key personnel, which in the long term can be a barrier if the business wants to increase production capacity or expand its market.

Another finding in this process was the lack of formal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing the production steps. SOPs should cover the process sequence, ingredient measurements, mixing times, dough storage temperatures, and food safety parameters. The absence of SOPs makes it difficult to replicate the production process consistently, especially when the business needs to hire new workers or significantly scale up production.

Furthermore, the lack of documentation of the processing process also makes it difficult to evaluate or improve production methods. For example, if a consumer complains about changes in taste or texture, the business owner has no reference data to trace the source of the problem. (Pawindru & Purbasari, 2025)

Dimsum Making Process

The dim sum forming process is done manually by placing the dough onto a sheet of dim sum skin and then shaping it with your fingers to resemble the typical siomay shape. No special molds or presses are used to standardize the size. This manual technique does provide a homemade touch and maintains the product's characteristics, but from a production-scale perspective, it has several drawbacks.

The resulting dim sum is not always uniform in shape. Some dim sum appear thicker, smaller, or taller than others. This size irregularity has implications for the steaming process. Larger dim sum require longer steaming times than smaller ones, potentially resulting in varying degrees of doneness within a single production batch. While consumers have not yet complained about the inconsistent shape or size, from a food production standards perspective, size consistency is crucial to maintaining consistent quality and taste with every purchase.

When demand increases, especially on weekends or during large orders from food delivery platforms, the shaping process is accelerated. Owners and workers must work intensively to meet deadlines. This often leads to physical exhaustion, as the dim sum shaping process requires fine motor skills and is performed repeatedly over a long period of time.

Furthermore, the limited skilled workforce is a crucial factor at this stage. The dim sum-forming process requires specific technical skills to ensure the results are proportionate and neat. When new workers join or have no previous experience, training times are lengthened and productivity declines.

If a business wants to increase production capacity, using dim sum printing equipment, training in standardized skills, or standardizing shapes through standard operating procedures (SOPs) can be solutions to speed up processes, reduce manual workloads, and improve product consistency. (Widodo, 2021)

Steaming Process and Quality Inspection

The steaming process is a crucial step in dim sum production, as it determines the level of doneness, texture, and food safety before serving the product to consumers. In this MSME, steaming is carried out using a multi-tiered aluminum steamer heated over a gas stove. The steamer can accommodate several layers of dim sum in one process, but its capacity remains limited because the equipment used is household and not yet small-scale industrial.

Dim sum is determined visually through direct observation by the owner or an experienced worker. Temperature measuring devices such as digital food thermometers or automatic timers are not used to determine steaming time. Owners rely on taste and intuition to determine whether the dim sum is fully cooked or needs more time. This experience-based method allows for flexibility in the production process, but from a food production standards perspective, this approach is less than ideal, as the degree of doneness can vary depending on the size of the dim sum, the amount of product in the steamer, and the steam pressure.

These variations in steaming conditions can potentially lead to texture differences, such as dim sum being too soft, too hard, or undercooked in the center, especially as production volumes increase. While most consumers still

accept these results, inconsistencies in quality can impact long-term customer satisfaction.

In addition to ready-to-eat products, this MSME also produces dim sum in frozen form. For this variant, the dim sum is partially steamed (semi-cooked) before entering the storage stage. After a brief steaming process, the product is cooled to room temperature before being stored in the freezer. The cooling process aims to prevent the formation of water vapor (condensation) in the packaging, which can trigger microbial growth or texture damage. (Christiana Retnaningsih, Okti Ruenda, Bernadeta Irmawati, 2025)

However, storage facilities still use standard household freezers, which lack the stable temperature control capability of -18°C , ideal for storing frozen products. Temperature fluctuations in household freezers can cause changes in product quality during storage, particularly if freeze-thaw cycles or repeated freezing occur. These changes can include brittle textures, cracked dim sum skins, or sensory changes when the product is re-steamed by consumers.

The quality control process is still carried out simply through visual inspections and periodic taste tests. There are no inspection forms or written quality standards to use as a basis for evaluation. This leaves the quality assurance process unstructured and highly dependent on the owner's experience.

To improve product quality and process stability, these MSMEs can consider implementing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for steaming time and temperature, using digital thermometers, kitchen timers, and investing in dedicated freezers for frozen foods. With more measurable standards, dim sum quality can be more consistent, production capacity can increase, and opportunities for expansion into the retail market or wider distribution become more realistic. (Zahra Putri Fairuz, Lyra Agusta Salsabila, Syaquina Lailatul Zahra, Ayuni⁴, 2024)

Marketing and Consumer Response

Marketing strategy is a crucial aspect in developing a culinary business, including the dim sum products produced by this MSME. Research shows that marketing is conducted through three main channels: direct sales at the production house, social media marketing, and sales through food delivery platforms such as GrabFood and GoFood. Direct sales are generally conducted by consumers in the local area who have been familiar with the product since its inception. Meanwhile, social media serves as a promotional and branding tool, particularly through product photos, consumer reviews, and discounted package offers.

Online ordering platforms have significantly contributed to increasing market reach. Based on interviews with owners, approximately 60–70% of customers who order through the app are repeat customers who have made

more than one purchase. This high level of customer retention indicates that the taste, price, and purchasing convenience aspects have met consumer expectations. Several reviews received through the app also indicate that consumers consider the product to have a taste that suits local tastes and is suitable as a family meal or snack. (Windharto, 2015)

However, the marketing strategy implemented remains passive and has not been formalized. Promotions have not been implemented consistently, and there are no loyalty-based marketing programs such as points, vouchers, or discounts for repeat customers. Furthermore, digital content marketing has not been maximized, for example through production process videos, testimonials, collaborations with food influencers, or paid advertising on social media, which could significantly expand consumer reach.

Regarding consumer response, it was discovered that businesses lack a systematic mechanism for measuring customer satisfaction. Feedback is currently obtained through direct conversations, social media comments, and reviews on ordering apps. This approach is reactive and undocumented, making the data unusable for trend analysis or ongoing product quality evaluation.

The absence of customer satisfaction surveys also leads to business owners lacking a deeper understanding of consumer preferences regarding flavor variations, portion sizes, packaging, or new menu innovations. Yet, in a dynamic culinary market, understanding consumer preferences is crucial for maintaining position and increasing competitiveness. (Budi Rahardjo et al., 2022)

Major Problems in the Production Process

Based on observations and interviews, it was discovered that production activities at the Dimsum Harum Rasa MSME have actually been running quite well, but several obstacles remain that affect the smoothness and stability of production. These problems arise not from a lack of skill or experience on the part of the owner, but rather from limited facilities, work systems, and the lack of standardized production procedures.

One major obstacle is the lack of a written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for production. The entire process, from grinding the chicken and determining the spice composition to forming the dim sum, relies heavily on the owner's habits and taste preferences. This method maintains a distinctive flavor that is difficult for other businesses to replicate, but it also creates a high level of dependence on the owner. If production is eventually outsourced, there's a risk that the dim sum will not taste as it normally would. This can negatively impact customer satisfaction if not properly maintained.

Limited equipment is also a challenge. The production process still uses household appliances such as simple grinders and manual steamers. Automatic production capacity is limited, especially when the number of

orders increases on certain days. The steaming process, which is carried out without temperature and time controls, often results in the dim sum being cooked solely by the experience of the workers. This situation can potentially lead to differences in texture in some parts of the dim sum, especially when production is carried out in large quantities in a rush. (Turipanam Alamanda et al., 2024)

Furthermore, raw material procurement is still carried out daily, so operational costs are heavily influenced by market price fluctuations, particularly chicken prices, which often experience sudden increases. Because there are no bulk purchases or adequate storage systems, owners struggle to achieve cost savings through wholesale purchases. This makes it difficult to accurately determine the Cost of Goods Sold (COGS), resulting in inconsistent monthly net profits.

Another apparent obstacle is the lack of a well-organized bookkeeping system. Recording of income and expenses is still done simply through daily journals. This makes it difficult for owners to evaluate business progress over time, including predicting peak and low sales periods, determining promotional strategies, or planning business expansion.

All of these issues demonstrate that the business actually has significant growth potential, as the product is well-received by consumers and has a viable market. However, to advance to a broader stage of business development, improvements are needed, particularly in production management, standardization of procedures, and more structured financial accounting. (Oktaviani & Putri, 2025)

Evaluation of Production Operations and Business Management

The dim sum production process at the Dimsum Harum Rasa MSME demonstrates a well-organized workflow, from raw material preparation to product packaging. However, this process is still semi-manual and lacks standard operating procedures. This results in production being highly dependent on the experience and skills of the business owner. This finding was also found in research by Paramita and Utami (2021), which found that many culinary MSMEs in Indonesia still rely on traditional methods without documented SOPs, resulting in unstable product quality when demand increases.

During the raw material processing process, chicken meat is selected based on visual assessment and the owner's habits. While this step maintains the authenticity of the business's signature flavor, it does not guarantee consistent homogeneity of the final product. Research by Sari (2020) indicates that raw material selection standards are a critical factor in maintaining the quality of processed food products.

The absence of these standards can lead to variations in taste and texture in the final product. This situation is also evident in the Dimsum Harum

Rasa MSME, especially when demand increases and production time becomes more limited. (Setiyawan et al., 2023)

The dim sum dough mixing process is still done manually, estimating measurements based on the owner's experience. This impacts the quality, which can potentially change when the process is carried out by other workers. According to Pratama and Sembiring (2022), ingredient measurements are a crucial part of food quality control, as even small differences in grammage can alter flavor and texture. Therefore, without written guidelines, flavor consistency is difficult to maintain.

Dim sum is steamed using a multi-tiered steamer with limited capacity. The steaming process, which lacks temperature and time controls, requires workers to constantly monitor the steamer's condition. This aligns with Lestari's (2019) findings that the use of simple kitchen equipment in MSMEs results in longer production times and requires more labor. If demand increases, MSME production capacity will struggle to adjust without equipment upgrades.

In terms of packaging, MSMEs use simple mica plastic packaging due to cost considerations. While economical, this packaging doesn't fully support brand identity development. Research by Rahmah and Dewi (2020) found that packaging directly influences consumer appeal, particularly in the fast food industry. Attractive packaging can increase sales value and convey a professional impression.

Business management is still carried out manually, including financial and inventory records. Recording is done only in simple notebooks without a structured summary of income and expenses. Research by Fitri and Nugraha (2021) shows that even simple bookkeeping can help MSMEs understand profit and expense flows and facilitate business development evaluations. The lack of organized bookkeeping makes it difficult for owners to calculate net profit and determine business development strategies.

Despite its limitations, the Dimsum Harum Rasa MSME boasts a consistent, popular taste and a stable customer base based on daily sales and orders. This superior taste provides crucial capital for further business development. As long as the MSME can improve its production management and administration, opportunities for expansion and production scale-up are abundant.

Overall, this discussion indicates that the Dimsum Harum Rasa MSME is in a growth phase but has not yet standardized. Improvements in SOPs, production equipment, and bookkeeping systems are essential to increase competitiveness and business sustainability. (Suwandi et al., 2025)

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research on the dim sum production process at the Dimsum Harum Rasa MSME in Medan City, it can be concluded that

production activities are running routinely and are able to meet consumer demand, however, there are still several things that need to be improved so that the business can develop more optimally. The dim sum production process in this business is carried out semi-manually, starting from raw material processing, mixing the dough, forming the dim sum, steaming, and packaging. The absence of written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) makes the production process still highly dependent on the experience and habits of the owner. This causes the potential for product quality to be inconsistent if there is a change of workers or an increase in production scale.

In terms of raw material availability, this business faces challenges in the form of fluctuating chicken prices, which can impact production costs. The lack of a storage and inventory management system means that ingredients are purchased in limited quantities on a daily basis. Furthermore, the equipment used is still rudimentary, preventing production capacity from being increased to meet market demand.

Business management is still carried out manually, including financial records and sales control. This situation makes it difficult for the owner to assess overall business development and develop long-term business strategies. Despite this, the Dimsum Harum Rasa MSME boasts key advantages, including its popular taste and strategic location, giving it significant potential for growth amidst the competitive culinary scene in Medan.

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