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Enhancing Geo-Culinary Competitiveness of MSMEs through Sustainable Marketing in Geopark West Java Indonesia

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Abstract

This study investigates the sustainable marketing and competitiveness of geoculinary products in the geopark. The geopark in West Java Indonesia has geodiversity, biodiversity and culturediversity contribute unique characteristics to local culinary offerings, elevating their appeal in international markets. Geodiversity enhances the quality of raw materials; biodiversity ensures a sustainable supply of distinct ingredients, and cultural diversity enriches the processing and presentation, making these culinary products highly marketable. The results show sustainable marketing positively affected competitiveness through the mediation of innovation strategy in MSMEs (Micro Small Medium Enterprise). The study found sustainable marketing have influence on MSME's competitiveness, through innovations. The MSMEs innovations, include culture-based storytelling, sustainable packaging, and certifications, all fostering trust and loyalty among global consumers. The findings demonstrate by combining traditional and digital marketing approaches, focusing on sustainability, culture, and technological innovation, significantly boosts the competitiveness of MSMEs in the geo-culinary sector. The study recommends capitalizing on geodiversity and biodiversity, adopting environmentally friendly production processes, and leveraging sustainable marketing to enhance global market competitiveness.

Keywords: *Biodiversity, Culturediversity, Geoculinary, Geodiversity, Sustainable Marketing.*

Introduction

The concept of geoculinary and its relevance to sustainable tourism are increasingly recognized as pivotal in the intersection of gastronomy and sustainable tourism practices. This relationship is multifaceted, intertwining local gastronomy with sustainable practices to enhance both visitor experiences and community well-being. Geoculinary which emphasizes local food products tied to specific geographical areas, plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism by fostering a connection between tourists and local cultures, while also supporting local economies. The significant aspect of this relationship is the role of geoculinary in enhancing the attractiveness of geoparks and other tourist destinations. The GEOfood project, initiated by UNESCO Global Geoparks, aims to integrate local gastronomic values with geological attractions, thereby promoting sustainable strategies for agriculture and local food production (Çeşmeci, et.al. 2024). This initiative not only attracts visitors but also encourages them to engage with local food systems, thereby enhancing their overall experience and appreciation of the destination's cultural heritage. Sustainable marketing plays a crucial role in the promotion and development of geoculinary, serving as a strategic tool to align local food products with broader environmental and cultural sustainability goals. By emphasizing the ecological and cultural significance of geoculinary sustainable marketing strategies can differentiate these products in the tourism marketplace, attracting environmentally conscious travellers who value authenticity and sustainability. This approach not only enhances the visibility of geoculinary but also reinforces its role in preserving local traditions and promoting ecological stewardship.

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The integration of sustainable marketing practices involves highlighting the unique attributes of geoculinary, such as its origins in geologically significant areas and its ties to local biodiversity and culture. By leveraging storytelling and authentic narratives, marketers can create compelling connections between the food and its geographical context, thereby enriching the tourist experience. This strategy supports the broader objectives of sustainable tourism by promoting responsible consumption and fostering a deeper appreciation for local cultures and environments (Sangkhaduang et al., 2021). Moreover, sustainable marketing can facilitate partnerships between local producers and tourism operators, creating synergies that enhance the economic resilience of local communities while ensuring the conservation of cultural and natural resources (Wakil et al., 2021).

Geoparks play a crucial role in this context by serving as designated areas that protect geodiversity while promoting educational and recreational opportunities. They facilitate the development of geotourism by marketing unique geological features and landscapes, which can attract tourists and generate economic benefits for local communities. The promotion of geosites within geoparks can lead to increased tourism activities, thereby enhancing local economies and creating job opportunities, particularly in rural areas where traditional tourism may be lacking (Singtuen et al., 2022; Filocamo et al., 2020; Novianti, 2023). Furthermore, geoparks often incorporate geoculinary—local culinary traditions that utilize geological resources—into their marketing strategies, thereby enriching the tourist experience and promoting local culture (Chakraborty, 2022).

Geoparks have emerged as significant drivers of geoculinary development in various countries, leveraging their unique geological heritage to promote local gastronomy and sustainable agricultural practices. The GEOfood project, initiated by UNESCO Global Geoparks, exemplifies this trend by integrating local gastronomic values into the geopark experience, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of these areas to visitors while simultaneously supporting local food production and agricultural sustainability (Çeşmeci, 2024). This initiative fosters a deeper appreciation for local cuisines and encourages the preservation of traditional food practices that are often tied to the region's geological and cultural heritage. The gap in international recognition and strategic development of geoculinary products in Indonesia's geoparks is a significant challenge. This gap is multifaceted, encompassing issues of visibility, marketing strategies, and the integration of local gastronomic practices into the broader framework of geotourism. Geoparks, as defined by UNESCO, are areas that promote geological heritage while fostering sustainable development through education and tourism. However, the potential of geoculinary as local food products that are tied to the geological and cultural heritage of a region—remains underutilized in many geoparks, leading to missed opportunities for enhancing local economies and visitor experiences.

One of the gap is the lack of cohesive marketing strategies that effectively promote geoculinary alongside geological attractions. Çeşmeci (2024) highlights that while geoparks have initiated projects like GEOfood to enhance their appeal, many still struggle to integrate local gastronomic values into their marketing efforts .This is echoed by Triana and Ruhimat (2018), who note that geoparks often focus on conservation and education but may overlook the economic potential of local food systems (Triana & Ruhimat, 2018). The challenge lies in creating a unified narrative that connects geological features with local culinary traditions, which can enhance the overall visitor experience and promote sustainable tourism. The uneven distribution of geodiversity resources in the geopark have hamper the strategic development of geoculinary initiatives. Piget-Migon (2024) discusses how certain geoparks successfully leverage local agricultural products, such as wine in Hungary's Bakony-Balaton Geopark, to attract tourists. However, this is not universally applicable, as many geoparks lack the necessary infrastructure or community engagement to develop similar geoculinary strategies. The integration of local food into geoparks requires a collaborative approach, effective management and community involvement are crucial for the sustainable development of geotourism and geofood (Fauzi & Misni, 2022).

This research objective is to find out about the effect of sustainable marketing and innovation on MSMEs' competitiveness in West Java's Geopark for geoculinary products. The study will provide insights for MSMEs' management to develop strategic plan and initiatives to increase their geoculinary product competitiveness.

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Methodology

Research Methodology

The approach used in this research on Sustainable Marketing Models for increasing competitiveness of MSMEs in West Java Geopark which used a quantitative approach, with descriptive analysis. The case study focused on MSMEs located in three geoparks in West Java Indonesia, which are: Aspiring Geopark Pangandaran, Aspiring Geopark Galunggung and Unesco Global Geopark (UGGp) Ciletuh Palabuhanratu. For descriptive analysis, content analysis was performed on secondary data from literature related to geoproducts, geoculinary, and sustainable marketing strategies, using a heuristic approach to identify key topics and interpret the data. Sustainable marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by integrating innovative practices that align with environmental and social responsibilities. In the context of the digital economy, sustainable marketing strategies, particularly green marketing, have been identified as significant contributors to the performance and sustainability of MSMEs (Rahmawati, 2023). Pandya points out that aligning sustainability goals with marketing strategies in the industry 4.0 environment is essential for MSMEs to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global market (Pandya, 2023).

The quantitative analysis involved data collection through surveys and interviews with MSMEs in the Geopark area, along with statistical tests using the SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares) method to test sustainable marketing models. Primary data was collected through online survey to MSMEs actors, while secondary data was obtained from academic literature, reports, and related online sources concerning marketing strategies, geoculinary competitiveness, and sustainability practices.

The research focused on MSMEs operating in the geoculinary sector. The MSMEs involved products derived from unique local resources, such as food and beverages made from materials originating from the area's distinct geological and biological conditions. The research aimed to improve the sustainability performance and competitiveness of MSMEs in this sector by implementing innovative digital marketing models. A survey online of 146 MSME actors in West Java participated as the sample for the study, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of sustainable marketing strategies in enhancing MSME competitiveness.

The quantitative analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), which modeled the relationship between sustainable marketing strategies and MSME competitiveness. This technique allowed the researcher to analyze survey data and measure variables, which are: sustainable marketing, innovation strategy, and competitiveness.

Statistical tests were conducted through correlation, regression, and path analysis to test hypotheses related to sustainable marketing innovation and MSME competitiveness. Indicators of sustainable marketing effectiveness included sales growth through digital channels, brand awareness among environmentally conscious consumers, local community involvement, and environmental sustainability through the use of eco-friendly materials and waste reduction. MSME competitiveness was measured by product innovation, global market expansion, financial performance, and customer satisfaction.

This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how sustainable marketing strategies could enhance the global competitiveness of MSME geoculinary. The SEM-PLS model provided accurate insights into the relationship between sustainable marketing and Innovation Strategy.

Based upon the relevant literature, four hypotheses have been proposed:

Sustainable marketing has a positive effect on innovation strategy.

Innovation strategy has a positive effect on competitiveness.

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Sustainable marketing has a positive effect on competitiveness.

Sustainable marketing positively affects competitiveness with innovation strategy as a mediating variable.

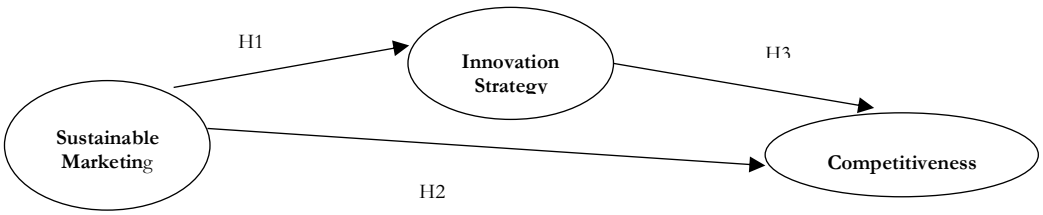

Figure 1. The Study Conceptual Framework

Results

Data Validity and Reliability Test

This study has carried out the data validity and reliability test. The research results showed that sustainable marketing has 10 indicators with an alpha score of 0.893. In addition, innovation strategy has 5 indicators with an alpha score of 0.861, and competitiveness has 4 indicators with an alpha score of 0.847. All constructs were reliable as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Results of Data Validation and Reliability Tests

Variable and Indicator	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Sustainable Marketing		0,893
SM1	0.797	
SM2	0.757	
SM3	0.757	
SM4	0.736	
SM5	0.733	
SM6	0.722	
SM7	0.702	
SM8	0.664	
SM9.	0.644	
SM10	0.619	
Innovation Strategy		0.861
IS 1	0.849	
IS 2	0,821	
IS 3	0.814	
IS 4	0.796	
IS 5	0.724	
Competitiveness		0.847
C1	0.894	
C2	0.807	
C3	0.806	
C4	0.803	

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Hypothesis Testing

The basis for testing the hypothesis is the values contained in the output results for inner weight. In PLS, statistical testing of each hypothesized connection is performed using simulation, and in this case, the bootstrapping method is employed. Bootstrapping is used to minimize issues related to the abnormality of research data. The results, along with the t-statistic values obtained from the bootstrapping process are as follows.

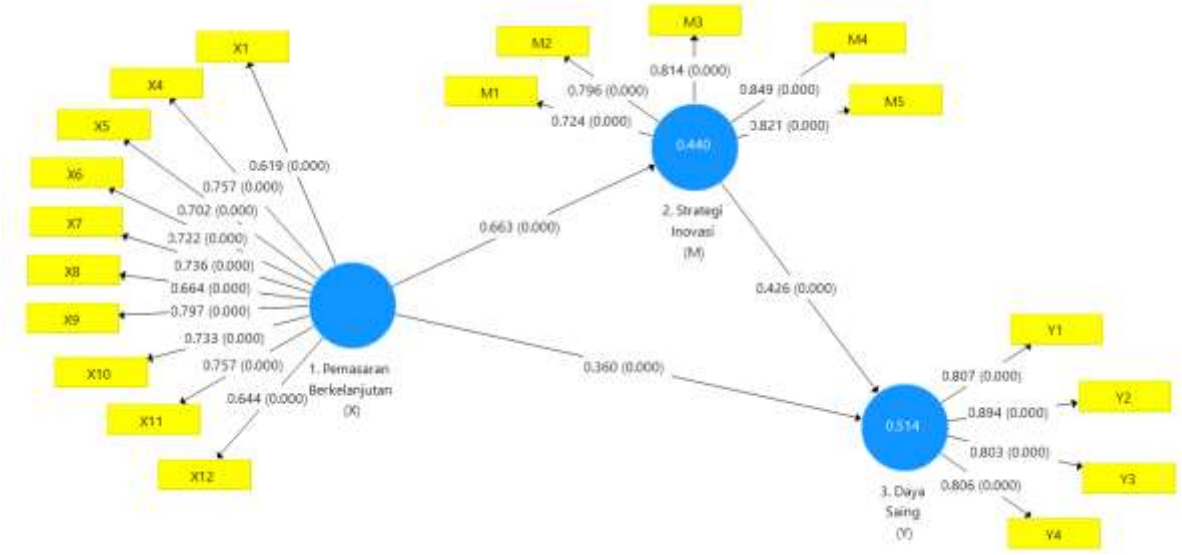

Figure 2. Hypothesis Testing

Based on the image above, the conclusions for the hypotheses in this research are as follows:

Table 4. Direct and Indirect Effect Test Results

Hypothesis Research	Connection between Construct	Coefficient	t count	CR	P Value	Information Hypothesis Research
H 1	X → M	0.663	14,049	1.96	0.000	H a Accepted
H 2	X → Y	0.360	4.211		0.000	H a Accepted
H 3	M → Y	0.426	4,680		0.000	H a Accepted
H 4	X → M → Y	0.282	4,516		0.000	H a Accepted

Based on the table 3 above, the Sustainable marketing (X) had a significant positive effect on innovation strategy (M), with a coefficient of 0.663 and a t-value of 14.049 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) was accepted (Ho was rejected and Ha was accepted). This means that the stronger the implementation of sustainable marketing by MSMEs, the stronger their innovation strategy becomes. Sustainable marketing (X) also had a significant positive effect on competitiveness (Y), with a coefficient of 0.360 and a t-value of 4.211 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, the second hypothesis (H2) was accepted, indicating that MSMEs that implement sustainable marketing practices tend to have higher competitiveness compared to their competitors. Innovation strategy (M) had a significant positive effect on competitiveness (Y), with a coefficient of 0.426 and a t-value of 4.680 ($p < 0.001$). Thus, the third hypothesis (H3) was accepted, demonstrating that the innovation strategies implemented by MSMEs increase their competitiveness in the market. Finally, sustainable marketing (X) also positively affected competitiveness (Y) through the mediation of innovation strategy (M), with a coefficient of 0.282 and a t-value of 4.516 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, the fourth hypothesis (H4) was accepted, indicating that innovation strategy is a key mediator in the relationship between sustainable marketing and MSME competitiveness. The total effect of the innovation strategy in mediating the effect of sustainable marketing on MSME

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competitiveness is presented in the following table:

Table 5. Total Effect Result

Connection between Construct	Effect			t value	P Value	95% CIBC*	
	Direct	Indirect	Total			2.5%	97.5%
X → M	0.66	-	0.66	14,05	0.000	0.55	0.74
X → Y	0.36	0.282	0.64	12,57	0.000	0.55	0.73
M → Y	0.43	-	0.43	4,68	0.000	0.23	0.59

*) Confidence Interval Bias Corrected

Based on the table above, it was observed that the total Effect of each tested exogenous predictor was significant ($p < 0.05$, with a 95% CI that does not include 0). This indicates that the innovation strategy is the predictor with the most substantial relative total effect on MSME competitiveness.

Discussions

Geodiversity, Biodiversity, and Culturediversity Potential for Geoculinary

Geodiversity, biodiversity, and cultural diversity play important roles in enhancing the global competitiveness of geoculinary products by offering unique characteristics that cannot be replicated in other regions. Geodiversity influences the quality of food materials through rich geological features, such as volcanic soil, which produces premium products with geographical advantages, like coffee or tea. Geographical Indication (GI) certification supports the branding of these products in the global market (Rodrigues et al., 2021). As Alahuhta et al. (2020) highlight, geodiversity plays a critical role in sustaining ecosystems and supporting unique biodiversity, which is crucial for developing competitive geoculinary products in regions with rich geological diversity. Read et al. (2020) emphasize that the combined effect of geodiversity and climate better explains biodiversity patterns at local and regional scales, suggesting that regions with high geodiversity can produce highly competitive geoculinary products due to their unique environmental conditions.

Biodiversity provides unique variations in essential ingredients like medicinal plants and spices, supporting sustainable production and attracting consumers who care about health and the environment (Su et al., 2020). Cultural diversity adds authenticity to geoculinary products through traditional recipes and techniques, which are highly valued in international markets and often promoted within culinary tourism (Yousef, K., 2024). Overall, these three aspects—geodiversity, biodiversity, and cultural diversity—create unique and sustainable geoculinary products, enhancing the global competitiveness of MSMEs.

The study revealed that geodiversity, particularly the unique geological formations and soil types of West Java Geopark, influences the quality and distinctiveness of the raw materials used in geoculinary products. Biodiversity, which includes a wide variety of endemic plant species, is crucial in ensuring local ingredients' sustainability. Cultural diversity adds value by incorporating traditional recipes and cooking techniques, which appeal to local and international markets. These elements provide a unique competitive advantage for MSMEs, particularly in markets where consumers seek products with authentic cultural and environmental backgrounds.

Innovation Strategy Development

Geoculinary innovations that support sustainability and attract global markets include using environmentally friendly local raw materials, a community collaboration to preserve cultural heritage, sustainable packaging, implementing green technologies, and developing health products based on biodiversity. Raw materials such as organic coffee or locally sourced honey help preserve the

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environment while enhancing the marketability of products with unique qualities that attract environmentally conscious consumers (Rodrigues et al., 2021). As Versino et al. (2023) note, sustainable packaging innovations, like biodegradable packaging, significantly boost competitive power in global markets, particularly in Europe and North America, where sustainability is a key concern.

Sustainable packaging, such as biodegradable materials, increases competitiveness in the global market, especially in regions like Europe and North America. Collaboration with local communities also strengthens product authenticity through traditional practices, such as natural fermentation, which adds cultural value (Yousef, K., 2024). Environmentally friendly technologies, such as hydroponics and renewable energy, support low-carbon production, appealing to consumers who prioritize sustainability (Farsani et al., 2012). Pichlak & Szromek (2021) emphasizes the role of eco-innovative companies in developing green technologies aimed at protecting biodiversity, aligning with the sustainable production of geoculinary products through low-carbon technologies like hydroponics and renewable energy.

Biodiversity provides a significant opportunity to develop health products, such as red ginger and turmeric, which are promoted as superfoods and appeal to global consumers seeking natural health benefits. These innovations focus on sustainability and authenticity, strengthening the competitive advantage of products in the international market. The study found that sustainable marketing strategies, particularly those incorporating digital platforms such as social media and e-commerce, significantly impact the market reach of geoculinary products. MSMEs that embraced digital storytelling , emphasizing their products' sustainability and cultural heritage, saw increased consumer engagement and trust. For instance, businesses that used narratives centered around their products' environmental and cultural sustainability were more likely to attract environmentally conscious global consumers. Innovation strategies in both product and process also contributed significantly to competitiveness. MSMEs that adopted eco-friendly production methods—such as biodegradable packaging and the use of local, organic ingredients—were able to differentiate themselves in the global market. The SEM-PLS results confirmed that both sustainable marketing ($\beta = 0.61$) and innovation strategies ($\beta = 0.59$) substantially impacted MSME competitiveness, with innovation slightly outperforming marketing regarding direct effects on performance.

Sustainable Marketing

Sustainable marketing of geoculinary products at the geopark includes branding based on local wisdom, storytelling, and digital marketing. Branding emphasizes the local cultural identity through storytelling, traditional symbols, and unique production techniques, supported by certifications like fair trade and geographical indications to build trust with global consumers (Rodrigues et al., 2021). As Bassano et al. (2019) highlight, digital storytelling about places enhances regional competitiveness in tourism and strengthens the sustainability narrative by emphasizing local identity and involving stakeholders. Shahrin, Ab Wahid, & Isa (2022) also stress that digital brand storytelling plays a crucial role in building emotional connections with consumers and enhancing sustainability practices, particularly in global markets where environmentally conscious consumers are on the rise.

Storytelling is used to highlight product origins, sustainable processes, and the positive impacts on the environment and local communities. This is reinforced through social media and visual content, building emotional connections and brand loyalty (Yousef, K., 2024). Digital marketing through e-commerce and social media expands global reach, with collaborations with influencers and blockchain technology for supply chain transparency, further increasing consumer trust (Farsani et al., 2012). Dessart & Standaert (2023) also emphasize the strategic use of storytelling in sustainability communication, noting that authentic and emotionally engaging narratives significantly enhance brand credibility and consumer trust, particularly in sustainability-focused markets. Interactive campaigns, such as crowdfunding, pre-orders, and virtual tours, involve consumers directly and strengthen engagement. This combination of strategies helps MSMEs build an authentic and sustainable brand image, enhancing product competitiveness in the international market.

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Conclusion

This research confirms the importance of geodiversity, biodiversity, and cultural diversity in enhancing the competitiveness of geoculinary products from the West Java Geopark. Geodiversity of the area includes the quality of raw materials, biodiversity ensures the sustainable availability of resources, and cultural diversity adds unique cultural value to the processing and presentation of products, creating a strong appeal in the global market. Sustainable marketing innovations have been proven to increase MSME competitiveness. These innovations utilize digital technologies such as e-commerce and social media to highlight sustainability narratives and cultural values. Product and process innovations, such as the use of eco-friendly materials, sustainable packaging, and green technologies, strengthen the integration of sustainability into products.

Marketing techniques, such as storytelling based on local culture and the use of sustainability certifications (e.g., Fair Trade, Geographical Indication), are effective in enhancing brand image and building trust with global consumers. The combination of digital and traditional marketing strikes an ideal balance between cultural branding and sustainability, solidifying the position of products in the international market. MSMEs should include leveraging the unique geodiversity and biodiversity for product promotion, incorporating environmentally friendly innovations in production, adopting digital marketing strategies, and using storytelling, community collaboration, and sustainability certifications to strengthen product competitiveness. Innovation in sustainable packaging and blockchain technology is also essential for attracting sustainability-conscious global consumers. In conclusion, this study confirms the pivotal role that sustainable marketing and innovation play in enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the geoculinary sector. Additionally, the combination of sustainable marketing strategies and innovation is key to capitalizing on these natural and cultural resources, enabling MSMEs to compete effectively in global markets. These findings provide a roadmap for MSMEs to improve their competitiveness by integrating local natural assets with sustainable practices and digital marketing innovations.

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Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this work.

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