

Analysis Of Entrepreneurial Soft Skills In Improving MSME Business Sustainability In Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area

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Abstract. *The mangrove tourism area in Pasuruan has become an important economic potential through the existence of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises MSMEs. This phenomenon shows that MSMEs have a strategic role in building the local economy, especially in the tourism sector. MSMEs in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area may face unique challenges related to entrepreneurial soft skills that can affect their business sustainability. This issue involves local factors such as culture, markets, and local government policies. Ideally, MSMEs in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area need to understand and develop entrepreneurial soft skills to maintain and improve the sustainability of their business. This research aims to provide deeper insight and understanding regarding the role of entrepreneurial soft skills in supporting MSME business sustainability. Although there are several studies related to entrepreneurship and business sustainability, there is still a research gap, especially in the context of MSMEs in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on entrepreneurial soft skills in the context of MSME business in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area, which has not been studied in depth before. The sustainability of MSME business has a positive impact on local economic growth and regional development. Therefore, a better understanding of the role of entrepreneurial soft skills is very urgent to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area. The main objective of this study is to analyze the role of entrepreneurial soft skills in improving MSME business sustainability in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area, by exploring its positive impact on economic and social aspects. This research use descriptive qualitative approach. The research subjects involved MSMEs. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews and documentation. Data analysis involves data reduction, display, and inference, with triangulation used to ensure validity. The results of research, observations, and interviews show that in this study, MSME actors in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area showed creativity, adaptability, and good communication skills. They also have quick collaboration and problem-solving skills. The success of MSME businesses is reflected in their resilience to environmental changes and market dynamics. Close partnerships with local communities also make a positive contribution. Their business strategy involves product diversification, technology utilization, and external cooperation, while maintaining environmental sustainability. Recommendations involve soft skills training and support on product innovation to improve competitiveness and business sustainability.*

Keywords: *Soft Skill Entrepreneurship, MSMEs; Business Sustainability.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the mangrove tourism area in Pasuruan has reached its peak as a very vital economic potential, especially through significant contributions from Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This phenomenon not only reflects the rapid growth of the tourism sector, but also confirms the strategic role played by MSMEs in carving out the local economic landscape. With its natural beauty and diversity of mangrove ecosystems being the main attraction, Pasuruan mangrove tourism area has become an investment magnet for MSME players. Their existence not only creates jobs, but also contributes significantly to the economy through the wide range of products and services offered to local and international tourists (Garcia Henche, 2018; Labanauskaitė et al., 2020; Tomljenović & Dukić, 2018).

In this case, MSMEs are not just local business people, but the main pillar in local economic development (Ali et al., 2019; Hermawati, 2020; Ratnasari et al., 2020). They not only create unique tourist experiences, but also play an important role in promoting sustainability and environmental preservation in mangrove areas. The success of these MSMEs is not only seen from the aspect of income and profit alone, but also from its positive impact on the social and economic development of the surrounding community. However, behind the glitter of success, there are dynamics and challenges faced by MSME actors. Increasing competition, changing market trends, and various operational obstacles are part of the reality they face (Afthanorhan et al., 2018; Heydari Chianeh et al., 2018; Rashid, 2018). Therefore, the strategic role of MSMEs in building the local economy needs to be strengthened through a deeper understanding and development of entrepreneurial aspects. In this context, research on entrepreneurial soft skills in the middle of Pasuruan mangrove tourism area becomes very relevant. The introduction and development of these soft skills is expected to increase the competitiveness of MSMEs, overcome business challenges, and in turn, make a greater positive contribution to the sustainability of the local economy.

When we look at the current global economic panorama, the challenges faced raise the urgent need to improve entrepreneurial soft skills as a critical element in advancing business competitiveness. In the midst of global economic turmoil, the development of entrepreneurial soft skills is not only complementary, but also a core element that supports overall economic sustainability (Oumlil & Juiz, 2018; Wang et al., 2019; Wantara & Tambrin, 2019). Evolving economic challenges, such as rapid changes in technology, unpredictable global market dynamics, and geopolitical uncertainty, further emphasize the need for sustainability in business strategies. In this case, the development of entrepreneurial soft skills is an important foundation to answer these challenges. Adaptability, creativity, leadership, and mental toughness are all integral aspects of entrepreneurial soft skills that can help businesses deal with the changing global economic environment (Lynch et al., 2021; Machali et al., 2021; Yanto et al., 2022).

More than just a response to economic challenges, the integration of entrepreneurial soft skills is an imperative in supporting global competition. In an era of globalization, where markets are becoming increasingly connected and impactful simultaneously, MSMEs need more than just quality products or services. They must be able to innovate, communicate effectively, and collaborate across borders to compete sustainably in a competitive global business scene. This issue not only covers financial business sustainability, but also involves the role of MSMEs in sustainable global economic development. The integration of MSMEs

in the face of global competition can be a key driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, by creating job opportunities, increasing people's purchasing power, and reducing economic disparities. Thus, the development of entrepreneurial soft skills is not only a response to the dynamics of the global economy, but also a proactive strategy to support business sustainability and the positive contribution of MSMEs to balanced and inclusive global economic growth (Elango & Suryakumar, 2022; Meekaewkunchorn et al., 2021; Nuseir et al., 2020; Purbasari et al., 2021).

Ideally, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises MSMEs in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area should have a deep and comprehensive understanding of the importance of developing entrepreneurial soft skills. Understanding and mastering entrepreneurial soft skills is not just a complement, but an integral aspect needed to maintain, even improve, the sustainability of their business in the midst of changing market dynamics. MSMEs as a critical element in the local economic ecosystem, especially in the mangrove tourism sector, play a strategic role in creating unique attractions and experiences for tourists. In the face of various pressures and increasingly complex market demands, entrepreneurial soft skills become the foundation that enables MSMEs to remain relevant, innovative, and adaptive to changing business environments (Liguori et al., 2018; Metallo et al., 2021; Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2022). A deep understanding of entrepreneurial soft skills not only provides individual benefits for MSME owners, but also has a positive impact on the level of entrepreneurship in the local community. By developing soft skills such as creativity, adaptability, and communication skills, MSMEs can more effectively collaborate, innovate, and respond to evolving market dynamics.

Although the research literature on entrepreneurship and business sustainability has experienced rapid development, there is a significant research gap knowledge gap, especially when the focus is placed on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises MSMEs in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area. Literature search engines have presented useful findings, but until now, there has been no research that specifically explores the dynamics and entrepreneurial challenges faced by MSMEs in the scope of mangrove tourism in the local context of Pasuruan.

MSME business sustainability, especially in the tourism sector, is a complex and highly contextual research subject. There are significant differences in the business context of MSMEs in mangrove tourism areas when compared to other business sectors, and this raises the need for in-depth and contextual research to understand the unique problems and opportunities in this context. In addition, there has been no research that specifically explores the relationship between the development of entrepreneurial soft skills and the sustainability of MSME

businesses in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area. A deep understanding of the role of entrepreneurial soft skills in the context of tourism business in Pasuruan can provide special and necessary insights to develop appropriate and effective business development strategies (Fragoso et al., 2020; Gieure et al., 2020).

The uniqueness of this study lies in the fact that most entrepreneurial literature tends to give more emphasis to general macro or microeconomic aspects, and has not specifically covered the dynamics of MSME business in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism sector. With a focus on entrepreneurial soft skills, this research presents a new, in-depth perspective on how aspects of personality and interpersonal skills can be key to the success and sustainability of MSME businesses in this unique business environment. In addition, this study also tries to bring the local context of Pasuruan into the research spotlight, creating special insights and understanding of the business reality of MSMEs in mangrove tourism areas (Hudnurkar et al., 2022; Long et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2018). This shows the novelty of research in contributing to the entrepreneurship literature which is often general in nature and pays less attention to contextual variables.

In addition to providing insight into the importance of entrepreneurial soft skills, this research also has the potential to contribute to the development of models or strategies that can be adopted by MSMEs in various business sectors, especially those related to tourism. Thus, this research not only expands literature through new knowledge, but also creates a practical foundation for the implementation and development of policies oriented towards MSME business sustainability in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area. The novelty of this research lies not only in the unavailability of similar previous research, but also in efforts to open up new dimensions in the understanding of local entrepreneurship that can provide significant benefits for the economic development and sustainability of the local region.

The main objective of this study is to summarize a comprehensive effort to explore and analyze the crucial role of entrepreneurial soft skills in strengthening and improving the business sustainability of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area. In this context, the research objectives are designed to achieve a number of objectives that enrich our understanding of the complexity of MSME business and the positive impact of developing entrepreneurial soft skills at the economic and social levels.

The results of the research are expected to have positive implications for MSME actors, local governments, and other related parties in formulating policies and strategies that support the development of entrepreneurial soft skills to improve business sustainability in the region.

This implication is expected to make a positive contribution to local economic development and empowerment of local communities.

THEORETICAL

The theoretical overview outlined in this study comes from a number of relevant previous studies, as the basis for the theoretical framework, determination, and analysis of the study as follows

Entrepreneurship Soft Skills

The entrepreneurial soft skills in this study include several key skills. First, creativity involves the ability to come up with innovative ideas. Adaptability reflects the ability to adapt to market changes. Communication skills are important for establishing relationships and promoting business. Collaboration skills focus on teamwork and partnerships. Problem solving emphasizes solving business problems. Leadership includes the ability to motivate and direct a team. Decision making demands the ability to make strategic decisions(Chan et al., 2020; Mardjuni et al., 2022; Santoso, 2020; Šimunović et al., 2018).

MSMEs in Tourism Areas

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises MSMEs in tourist areas can be interpreted as a set of economic business activities operating in locations designated as tourism destinations(Esubalew & Raghurama, 2020; Hidayat et al., 2020; Kilay et al., 2022; Ogheneogaga Irikefe & Isaac Opusunju, 2021). First, Micro Business (UM) in this context refers to businesses with assets of at least Rp 50 million, but less than Rp 300 million, in accordance with the provisions of Law Number 20 of 2008. This type of business may include stalls, small shops, or local service services. Second, Small Business (UK) refers to businesses with minimum assets of Rp 300 million, but less than Rp 2.5 billion, in accordance with the same provisions. Examples of UK tourist areas could include small inns, gift shops, or small-scale restaurants. Furthermore, Medium Enterprises (UM) are businesses with minimum assets of Rp 2.5 billion, but less than Rp 50 billion. In the context of tourist areas, UM may include mid-sized hotels or resorts, travel agencies, or larger culinary businesses.

A tourist area, as a key element of operational definition, includes a location or area identified and developed for tourism purposes. This could involve natural beauty, historical sites, or other tourist attractions that attract tourists. With this understanding, research is directed to explore the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities faced by MSMEs operating in tourist areas. Operational definitions help identify and understand the characteristics of these

businesses in the context of tourism, enabling a more in-depth analysis of their contribution to the local economy and the sustainability of tourist destinations.

Business Sustainability

MSME business sustainability refers to the ability of a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise to operate continuously and effectively in the long term. It involves achieving stable incomes, adapting to market changes, and contributing positively to economic and social aspects in local communities. In the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area, the research will explore the factors that affect the sustainability of MSME businesses, providing a deeper understanding of their impact on economic growth and the welfare of local communities (Arsawan et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2023; Yin et al., 2020).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study design to gain an in-depth understanding of Entrepreneurship Soft Skills in improving the sustainability of MSME businesses in the Mangrove Tourism Area of Pasuruan City. The research location in Pasuruan in the tourism sector is MSME actors in the mangrove tourism area by considering the innovation and creativity of MSME actors in the tourist area. The data sources include primary data in the form of interviews and observations of key informants, namely the chairman of the Karang Taruna in the Pasuruan mangrove tourist area, 2 MSME actors both young and old in the tourist area and an additional informant, namely the tourist site guard (Pokmawas). Four informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Secondary data was obtained from entrepreneurship books, previous research articles, and research subject business documents.

The research data validation procedure uses triangulation through participant observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model which includes data collection, reduction, presentation and drawing conclusions. Checking the validity of the data uses credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability tests. Research stages include pre-field work, data collection, data analysis, evaluation, and report preparation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Overview of the object of study

Based on research skunder data can be submitted As a leading tourist destination in Pasuruan Regency, the Mangrove Forest in Penunggul Village, Nguling District, is a natural gem rich in beauty and diversity of ecosystems. With a land area of 144 hectares and located along 2 kilometers on the shoreline, this mangrove forest is a special place that is the pride of the local community. Pasuruan Mangrove Forest is not only known as the best example of mangrove forest in Indonesia but has also received high awards, such as Kalpataru and Satya Development Badge from the State Government. Its existence not only supports the local ecology as a counterweight to nature, but also attracts scientific researchers from various parts of the world, including Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Australia.

With 123 species of mangroves, such as *Rhyzopora Mucronata*, *Abisina Alba*, *Rhyzopora Apiculata*, and *Alasina Marina*, Pasuruan Mangrove Forest offers an immersive tourist experience. Apart from being a place of scientific research, this forest is also a habitat for various types of fauna, including birds, reptiles, and amphibies. With its natural beauty, environmental sustainability, and awards, Pasuruan Mangrove Forest strengthens its image as an educational and inspiring ecological tourism destination. Welcome to Pasuruan Mangrove Forest, where nature meets local wisdom and global knowledge.

Discussion

Based on observations and results of interviews with informants. Through the participatory observation method, researchers were actively involved in the daily activities of MSME actors in the Pasuruan City Mangrove Tourism Area. Observations were carried out by observing the sales process from opening to closing, along with a description of the research results

Sofft Entrepreneurial Skills Possessed by MSME Actors in Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted with Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area, a deeper understanding of their entrepreneurial soft skills can be obtained. The following is an additional explanation based on observations and interviews:

1) Creativeness:

Observation: MSME actors seem to be actively developing new ideas to attract the attention of visitors. They create unique products and services, such as guided tours through innovative mangrove trails.

Interview Results: Some MSME actors stated that their creativity arises from a deep understanding of visitors' needs and expectations, which they always pay attention to and evaluate.

2) Adaptability:

Observation: MSME actors seem to be able to adapt to weather changes and tourist seasons. For example, they change marketing strategies or adjust product types according to certain seasons.

Interview: MSME players mentioned that adaptability is a key skill in running a business in tourist areas, where visitor fluctuations and market trends can occur quickly.

3) Communication Skills:

Observation: MSME actors look friendly and have good speaking skills when interacting with visitors. They clearly explain the uniqueness of their products and services.

Interview: Some MSME actors recognize the importance of persuasive communication in convincing visitors to choose their products or services.

4) Collaboration Capabilities:

Observations: Some MSME actors seem to be involved in collaborative projects with other business actors in tourist areas, such as developing joint tour packages or improving joint facilities.

Interview: MSME actors emphasize the importance of cooperation between tour service providers to create a holistic experience for visitors.

5) Troubleshooting:

Observation: MSME actors seem responsive and quick to overcome daily operational problems, such as handling visitor complaints or adjusting strategies when the weather is not supportive.

Interview: They stated that the ability to solve problems quickly and effectively is vital in maintaining business continuity in dynamic tourist areas.

The results of observations and interviews provide a holistic picture of how these entrepreneurial soft skills are not only possessed, but also applied by MSME actors in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area to manage their businesses successfully and sustainably. The entrepreneurial soft skills in this outcome include several key skills. First, creativity

involves the ability to come up with innovative ideas. Adaptability reflects the ability to adapt to market changes. Communication skills are important for establishing relationships and promoting business. Collaboration skills focus on teamwork and partnerships. Problem solving emphasizes solving business problems. Leadership includes the ability to motivate and direct a team. Decision making demands the ability to make strategic decisions (Chan et al., 2020; Mardjuni et al., 2022; Santoso, 2020; Šimunović et al., 2018).

MSME Business Continuity in Pasuraun Mangrove Tourism Area

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted with Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area, an overview of their business continuity can be described:

1) Technology Utilization:

Observations: Some MSME players have adopted technology, such as the use of social media for online marketing and reservations, which is seen helping them reach a wider market.

Interview: MSME players said that technology plays a key role in increasing the visibility of their business, especially in the growing digital era.

2) Cooperation with External Parties:

Observations: Most MSME actors are involved in cooperation with external parties, such as local governments, tourism institutions, or other business partners, to improve facilities and joint marketing.

Interview: MSME actors emphasized the importance of support from external parties in facing various challenges, from infrastructure to tourism promotion.

3) Environmental Sustainability Management:

Observations: Most MSME actors in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area seem to prioritize environmentally friendly practices and conservation, such as waste management and environmental education for visitors.

Interview: MSME actors realize that environmental sustainability not only supports tourist attraction, but also becomes a long-term investment in maintaining the natural resources they utilize.

4) Business Resilience to Change:

Observations: MSME players show resilience in facing changes in weather, tourist seasons, and market situations by making rapid adjustments to their strategies and products.

Interview: They acknowledge that the resilience of this business is gained through years of experience and the ability to learn from the challenges faced.

5) Partnerships with Local Communities:

Observations: MSME actors were seen collaborating with local communities in various aspects, including the procurement of raw materials, training local workers, and organizing joint events.

Interview: Partnerships with local communities are considered important in creating mutually beneficial synergies and increasing mutual competitiveness in mangrove tourism areas.

Based on these observations and interviews, it can be seen that the business continuity of MSMEs in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area can be achieved through diversification, technology utilization, external cooperation, sustainable environmental management, business resilience, and close partnerships with local communities. These factors together form a strong foundation to ensure the business remains sustainable in a dynamic tourist environment. MSME business sustainability refers to the ability of a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise to operate continuously and effectively in the long term. It involves achieving stable incomes, adapting to market changes, and contributing positively to economic and social aspects in local communities. In the Pasuruan mangrove tourism area, the research will explore the factors that affect the sustainability of MSME businesses, providing a deeper understanding of their impact on economic growth and the welfare of local communities (Arsawan et al., 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2023; Yin et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

In this study, researchers have conducted in-depth observations and interviews with Micro, Small and Medium MSME Enterprises in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area. Through this deep understanding, several significant conclusions can be drawn about the entrepreneurial soft skills possessed by MSME actors and the strategies they apply to maintain the sustainability of their business. MSME players in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area show extraordinary expertise in a number of entrepreneurial soft skills. Creativity becomes one of the main points seen through the development of new ideas, such as guided tours through innovative mangrove paths. Expertise in adapting to environmental changes, especially weather and tourist seasons, is also clearly observed. MSME actors show good communication skills, both in explaining the uniqueness of their products to visitors and in interacting in a friendly manner. In addition, collaboration among MSME players can be seen through joint projects and improvement of joint facilities.

Fast and effective problem solving is another skill possessed by MSME actors. Not only that, the results show that the resilience of their business is reflected in their ability to deal with weather changes, tourist seasons, and market dynamics with rapid adjustments. This success is also influenced by close partnerships with local communities. Involvement in joint activities, such as raw material procurement and training of local workers, creates mutually beneficial synergies.

In the context of business strategy, MSME players show proficiency in diversifying products and services, utilizing technology, and collaborating with external parties, such as local governments and tourism institutions. Environmental sustainability management is also a major concern, with eco-friendly practices and conservation as an integral part of their operations.

SUGGESTION

As a recommendation to support the sustainability of MSME business in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area, it is recommended to provide further training and development related to entrepreneurial soft skills. Strengthening technological infrastructure, strengthening partnerships with the government and tourism institutions, as well as environmental education and conservation are also considered important. Product and service innovation also needs to be encouraged to increase tourist attraction. With the implementation of these suggestions, it is hoped that MSME players can strengthen their business sustainability, make a positive contribution to the local economy, and maintain environmental sustainability in the Pasuruan Mangrove Tourism Area.

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