

# The Utilization of Regional Language-Based Communication as a Marketing Strategy for MSME Products in the Wakatobi Traditional Market

Cony<sup>1</sup>, Astil Harli Roslan<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Halu Oleo University Kendari, Lahundape, Kendari Barat, Kendari City, South East Sulawesi

<sup>2</sup>STIE Enam Enam Kendari, Lahundape, Kendari Barat, Kendari City, South East Sulawesi  
astilharliroslan7@gmail.com

## Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have a strategic role in the regional economy, including in Wakatobi Regency. One of the main challenges for MSMEs in traditional markets is the limitations of effective and contextual marketing strategies with local culture. This study aims to examine the use of regional language-based communication as a marketing strategy for MSME products in the traditional market of Wakatobi. The research method used is a qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation techniques for MSME actors, consumers, and market managers. The results of the study show that the use of regional languages in buying and selling interactions is able to increase emotional closeness, consumer trust, and customer loyalty. Thus, regional language-based communication can be an effective and sustainable marketing strategy for MSMEs in the traditional Wakatobi market.

**Keywords:** MSMEs, Regional Languages, Marketing Communication, Traditional Markets, Wakatobi.

## Abstrak

Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) memiliki peran strategis dalam perekonomian daerah, termasuk di Kabupaten Wakatobi. Salah satu tantangan utama bagi UMKM di pasar tradisional adalah keterbatasan strategi pemasaran yang efektif dan kontekstual dengan budaya lokal. Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti penggunaan komunikasi berbasis bahasa daerah sebagai strategi pemasaran produk UMKM di pasar tradisional Wakatobi. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap pelaku UMKM, konsumen, dan pengelola pasar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan bahasa daerah dalam interaksi jual beli mampu meningkatkan kedekatan emosional, kepercayaan konsumen, dan loyalitas pelanggan. Dengan demikian, komunikasi berbasis bahasa daerah dapat menjadi strategi pemasaran yang efektif dan berkelanjutan bagi UMKM di pasar tradisional Wakatobi.

Copyright (c) 2025 Cony, Astil Harli Roslan

✉Corresponding author: Astil Harli Roslan

Email Address: [astilharliroslan7@gmail.com](mailto:astilharliroslan7@gmail.com) (Lahundape, Kendari Barat, Kendari City, South East Sulawesi)

Received 17 December 2024, Accepted 23 December 2024, Published 29 December 2024

## INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have a strategic role in national and regional economic development, especially in Indonesia which has high social and cultural diversity (Sinha et al., 2024). In the context of marketing, MSMEs are required to be able to convey product value effectively in the midst of increasingly fierce competition. One of the approaches that is getting more and more attention is the use of regional language-based communication as a product marketing strategy (Vikaliana et al., 2021). This approach is considered relevant because it is able to bridge economic interests with local cultural values that are still strong in the community, especially in traditional markets (Moonti et al., 2023).

The popularity of the concept of regional language-based communication in marketing has increased along with the development of the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) approach,

which emphasizes message consistency and proximity to consumers (Ikhsana et al., 2019). Regional languages not only function as a means of communication, but also as a symbol of identity and social closeness. Therefore, the use of regional languages in MSME marketing strategies is an important and urgent issue to be researched, especially in the context of traditional markets that still rely on direct interpersonal interaction (Yusuf dan Roslan 2024).

The main variable in this study is regional language-based marketing communication, which is positioned as a strategy to increase the marketing effectiveness of MSMEs (Nasrul et al., 2023). Recent literature shows that culturally relevant communication can increase consumer trust, strengthen brand image, and build customer loyalty (Mujib & Nurvianti, 2021). In MSME organizations, interpersonal communication carried out in local languages is able to create more personal and emotional relationships, thus providing a competitive advantage that is difficult to replicate.

In addition, another variable that focuses on is consumer trust and engagement. Recent studies confirm that the use of regional languages in marketing communications can increase consumer engagement because messages are conveyed according to their social and cultural context (Pujiyanto et al., 2022; Nurrohmah et al., 2024). For MSME organizations, this is important because limited resources demand an effective, adaptive, and relatively low-cost marketing strategy (Yusuf and Roslan 2025).

Although many studies on marketing communication and local wisdom have been conducted, most previous research has focused on the tourism sector, destination branding, or medium- and large-scale companies (Priantana & Santoso, 2019; Ferdian, 2021). Research that specifically examines the use of regional languages as a marketing strategy for MSMEs in traditional markets is still relatively limited, especially in archipelago areas and regions with a high level of linguistic diversity.

From a theoretical perspective, there is a gap between modern marketing communication theory which tends to be oriented towards digital media and mass communication—and MSME marketing practices in traditional markets (Supriaddin et al., 2025). Common solutions that have been extensively researched place more emphasis on product innovation and the use of digital technology (Santoso et al., 2021; Hendrawanto et al., 2023), while the regional language aspect is still treated as a supporting element, not as a core marketing strategy.

This research offers a conceptual approach that positions regional language-based communication as the main marketing strategy for MSMEs. The research model integrates the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication, interpersonal communication theory, and social capital. Regional languages are seen as a mechanism that is able to mediate the relationship between MSME actors and consumers through the creation of trust, emotional closeness, and shared identity.

Through this model, the core concept of regional language-based communication is expected to be able to answer the research gap by presenting a contextual and applicative analytical framework. Regional languages not only function as linguistic tools, but also as strategic instruments that strengthen social and economic relations. Thus, this study provides a specific solution to the gap in the theory and practice of MSME marketing in traditional markets.

This research was conducted in the traditional market of Wakatobi Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, which is known to have a strong diversity of regional languages and local cultures. The interaction between sellers and buyers in the Wakatobi traditional market takes place directly and intensely, with the use of regional languages as the main medium of communication. This condition makes Wakatobi a relevant context to assess the effectiveness of regional language-based marketing communication in MSMEs (Roslan dan Akbar 2024).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of regional language-based communication as a marketing strategy for MSME products in the traditional Wakatobi market. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of marketing communication studies based on local wisdom as well as practical contributions for MSME actors and local governments in formulating marketing strategies that are contextual, sustainable, and oriented towards strengthening the local economy.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to deeply understand the use of regional language-based communication as a marketing strategy for MSME products in the traditional market of Wakatobi. The research informants consisted of five MSME actors who were selected through purposive sampling with the criteria of actively selling in traditional markets and directly interacting with consumers. Data collection is carried out through direct observation and in-depth interviews to explore the experiences, views, and marketing communication practices applied by business actors. The data obtained was analyzed descriptively through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to obtain a comprehensive picture of the role of regional languages in supporting MSME marketing activities.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to examine the use of regional language-based communication as a marketing strategy for MSME products in the traditional market of Wakatobi. Based on the results of in-depth interviews and observations of five MSME actors as research informants, several main findings were obtained that were adjusted to the formulation of the research problem.

### ***Forms of Regional Language Utilization in MSME Marketing Communication***

The findings of the study show that all informants actively use regional languages in the marketing communication process, especially when offering products, bargaining, and having informal conversations with consumers. Regional languages are used as the main language in daily interactions in traditional markets because they are considered more familiar, easy to understand, and reflect the local identity of the Wakatobi people. The use of regional languages is not only limited to mentioning the price or quality of products, but is also used to greet consumers, joke, and build a family atmosphere.

MSME actors use regional languages as a strategy to dilute the atmosphere and reduce social distance between sellers and buyers. This personal interaction is a hallmark of marketing in traditional markets, where social relationships often take precedence over mere transactions. These findings show that regional language-based communication plays a role as an effective interpersonal marketing tool in the context of traditional markets, in line with the characteristics of MSMEs that rely on social closeness as the main strength.

### ***Benefits of Using Regional Languages on Consumer Interests and Trust***

The results of the study revealed that the use of regional languages has a positive impact on buying interest and consumer confidence. The informants stated that consumers tend to be more comfortable shopping when served using the local language because they feel valued and treated as part of the same community. Regional languages are able to create emotional closeness that is difficult to achieve through the use of formal languages or national languages.

In addition to increasing convenience, regional language-based communication also contributes to building consumer trust in MSME actors. Consumers consider business actors who use regional languages as honest, friendly, and trustworthy. This trust is becoming an important factor in purchasing decisions, especially in traditional markets that still rely on long-term relationships between sellers and buyers. These findings strengthen the view that regional languages not only function as a communication tool, but also as social capital that supports the sustainability of MSME businesses.

Furthermore, the use of regional languages also encourages repurchase and customer loyalty. Consumers who feel they have a close relationship with the seller tend to go back to shopping and recommend products to others. Thus, regional language-based communication plays a role as an indirect marketing strategy that strengthens the position of MSMEs in the midst of market competition.

### ***Obstacles in the Implementation of Regional Language-Based Communication***

Although it provides many benefits, this study also found several obstacles in the application of regional language-based communication as a marketing strategy. One of the main obstacles is the diversity of consumer backgrounds, especially buyers from outside the region or tourists who do not understand the local language. In this situation, MSME actors must adjust the language used so that communication remains effective and does not cause misunderstandings.

In addition, some informants expressed concerns in maintaining politeness and professionalism when using regional languages. Informal regional languages are sometimes considered inappropriate if used excessively, especially when interacting with new consumers. Therefore, MSME actors need to have the ability to adjust communication styles based on consumer situations and characteristics.

Another obstacle is the lack of special training that equips MSME actors with a strategic understanding of marketing communication based on local culture. The use of regional languages is still natural and hereditary, and has not been systematically developed as a planned marketing strategy. This shows the need for support from local governments or related institutions to provide assistance and training in marketing communication based on local wisdom.

Overall, the findings of this study show that regional language-based communication is a relevant and effective marketing strategy for MSMEs in the traditional Wakatobi market. This strategy is able to strengthen social relationships, increase consumer trust, and encourage customer loyalty. However, the effectiveness of this strategy needs to be supported by the adaptability of MSME actors in dealing with consumer diversity and policy support that encourages the preservation of regional languages in economic activities. These findings reinforce the importance of integration between cultural aspects and marketing strategies in the development of MSMEs. By utilizing regional languages wisely and contextually, MSMEs are not only able to increase product competitiveness, but also contribute to the preservation of local cultural identity in traditional markets.

### ***Discussion***

The results of this study show that regional language-based communication has a strategic role in supporting the marketing of MSME products in the traditional market of Wakatobi. The findings are in line with the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which emphasizes the importance of message consistency and proximity to consumers through various forms of marketing communication (Ikhsana et al., 2019). In the context of traditional markets, regional languages are the main medium that allows MSME actors to convey marketing messages in a personal, contextual, and easily accepted manner by local consumers.

The use of regional languages in buying and selling interactions found in this study reinforces the view of Mujib and Nurvianti (2021) that integrated marketing communication delivered through language that is familiar to consumers can improve product recognition and build brand loyalty. Regional languages not only function as a means of conveying information, but also as a symbol of identity and emotional closeness. This explains why consumers in the Wakatobi traditional market tend to feel more comfortable and confident when interacting with MSME actors who use local languages.

The findings of this study also support the results of the study of Pujiyanto et al. (2022) which stated that the effectiveness of sales and advertising promotions increases when messages are delivered using language that is relevant to the target audience. In the context of MSMEs in traditional markets, the use of regional languages has been proven to strengthen the attractiveness of marketing messages, facilitate the bargaining process, and create a more intimate and familial interaction atmosphere. This condition is a competitive advantage for MSMEs operating in a community-based environment.

In addition to direct communication, this research discussion also shows the relevance of regional languages in the development of MSME digital marketing. Although the focus of the research is on traditional markets, these findings can be attributed to the research of Nurrohmah et al. (2024) who affirm that digital marketing based on local contexts is able to improve consumer recall of products. The integration of regional languages in digital content, such as social media, has the potential to expand the marketing reach of MSMEs without losing their local identity.

From a sectoral perspective, the findings of this study are consistent with the research results of Priantana and Santoso (2019) and Ferdian (2021) which show that the use of local language in marketing

strategies is able to increase appeal, brand awareness, and emotional closeness of consumers. Although many of these studies have been conducted on the tourism sector and regional branding, the results of this study prove that the same principle also applies in the context of MSMEs in traditional markets. In other words, regional languages have a cross-sectoral function as a strengthening of the relationship between business actors and consumers.

This discussion also emphasized that regional languages play a role as social capital in MSME marketing activities. In line with the views of Lautania et al. (2024) and Hendrawanto et al. (2023), culturally relevant communication is able to increase consumer engagement and build long-term relationships. The findings of the study show that consumer trust and loyalty are not solely built through product quality, but also through the way MSME actors communicate and position themselves as part of the local community.

However, this research discussion also acknowledges the challenges in the implementation of regional language-based communication. The limited understanding of local languages by immigrant consumers and the lack of optimal use of digital media indicate the need for adaptive strategies. This is in line with Santoso et al. (2021) and Pattisahusiwa et al. (2024) who emphasize the importance of improving digital literacy and marketing training for MSMEs. With the right training support, regional languages can be strategically integrated in both direct and digital communication.

Overall, the discussion of this research confirms that the use of regional language-based communication is not just a traditional practice, but is a relevant and adaptive marketing strategy. These findings strengthen the arguments of Darmaningrum et al. (2021), Ardiansyah et al. (2024), and Widiatmoko and Wulandari (2024) that strengthening the capacity of MSMEs through sensitive communication to local culture can increase business competitiveness and sustainability. Thus, regional language-based communication can be positioned as a core strategy in the development of MSME marketing in traditional markets.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that regional language-based communication is an effective marketing strategy for MSMEs in the traditional Wakatobi market. The use of regional languages in buying and selling interactions can create emotional closeness, increase consumer trust, and encourage customer loyalty. Regional languages function not only as a communication tool, but also as cultural identities and social capital that strengthen the relationship between MSME actors and consumers, thus being in line with the principles of integrated marketing communication in the context of interpersonal marketing.

The implications of this study show that MSME actors need to utilize regional languages strategically and contextually in marketing activities, both directly and through digital media, without neglecting the professionalism of communication. Local governments and MSME companion institutions are advised to provide marketing communication training based on local wisdom. Further

research can develop this study by expanding the research location, increasing the number of informants, and combining quantitative approaches to measure the impact of regional language use on purchasing interest and consumer loyalty.

## REFERENCES

- Darmaningrum, K., Wijastuti, S., & Puspitasari, D. (2021). Digital Marketing Sebagai Solusi Pemasaran Umkm Di Kota Surakarta. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Dies Natalis 41 Utp Surakarta*, 1(01), 145-154. <https://doi.org/10.36728/semnasutp.v1i01.22>
- Ferdian, Y. (2021). Strategi Promosi Dalam Meningkatkan Tamu Hotel Grand Barumbay Samarinda Seberang. *Jurnal Administrasi Bisnis Fisipol*
- Hendrawanto, Y., Senoaji, A., Sapta, A., & Pradana, B. (2023). Pelatihan Digital Marketing dan Manajemen Keuangan pada UMKM Gardenia Art Indonesia. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 2(2), 59-64. <https://doi.org/10.54066/abdimas.v2i2.304>
- Ikhsana, P., Prisanto, G., & Anggraini, R. (2019). Penerapan Strategi E-Marketing Communication Dan Ekuitas Merek Siaranku.Com Terhadap Loyalitas Viewers. *Inter Komunika Jurnal Komunikasi*, 4(1), 58. <https://doi.org/10.33376/ik.v4i1.217>
- Lautania, M., Darwanis, D., Ariani, N., Linda, L., Afrianandra, C., & Fitri, M. (2024). Training in Marketing Strategies through Digital Marketing for Scaling Up Businesses of Silver Craft SMEs in Banda Aceh City. *Asian Journal of Community Services*, 3(1), 41-48. <https://doi.org/10.55927/ajcs.v3i1.6828>
- Moonti, A., Panjaitan, R., Adam, E., & Roslan, A. H. (2023). Linkages nascent entrepreneurship and knowledge quality resonance: explore voluntary co-creation from service dominant logic. *Business: Theory and Practice*, 24(1), 1-12.
- Mujib, M. and Nurvianti, M. (2021). Komunikasi Pemasaran Terpadu Dalam Meningkatkan Dana ZIS pada Lembaga Aamil Zakat di Era Covid-19. *Al-Kharaj Jurnal Ekonomi Keuangan & Bisnis Syariah*, 4(2), 432-447. <https://doi.org/10.47467/alkharaj.v4i2.683>
- Mujib, M. and Nurvianti, M. (2021). Komunikasi Pemasaran Terpadu Dalam Meningkatkan Dana ZIS pada Lembaga Aamil Zakat di Era Covid-19. *Al-Kharaj Jurnal Ekonomi Keuangan & Bisnis Syariah*, 4(2), 432-447. <https://doi.org/10.47467/alkharaj.v4i2.683>
- Nasrul, N., Rommy, N., Hapsari, I., Jurumai, L. P., & Roslan, A. H. (2023). The Role of Destination Brand Love in Mediating Destination Brand Authenticity on Destination Loyalty. *Jurnal Manajemen Industri dan Logistik*, 7(2), 295-307.
- Nurrohmah, S., Achmad, L., & Ma'mun, S. (2024). Pengaruh Digital Marketing terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Brand Nibras dengan Kepercayaan Konsumen sebagai Variabel Moderasi. *Al-Kharaj Jurnal Ekonomi Keuangan & Bisnis Syariah*, 6(8). <https://doi.org/10.47467/alkharaj.v6i8.3407>

- Pattisahusiwa, S., Rahmadi, B., Sari, A., & Lenjau, S. (2024). Penerapan dan Pemanfaatan Platform Digital dalam Rangka Peningkatan Daya Saing UMKM Desa Lekaq Kidau. *JAN*, 1(2), 54-60. <https://doi.org/10.70392/jan.v1i2.5460>
- Priantana, A. and Santoso, E. (2019). Strategi Promosi Objek Wisata Alam Situ Gede Kota Tasikmalaya. *Jurnal Komunikasi Global*, 8(1), 104-115. <https://doi.org/10.24815/jkg.v8i1.13586>
- Pujianto, W., Musyaffaah, L., Haromany, M., & Lisdiyanto, A. (2022). Integrated, Marketing Integrated Marketing Communication Pada Daya Tarik Embrio Destinasi Wisata Bahari Melalui Brand Building. *Jurnal Iqtisaduna*, 8(1), 57-61. <https://doi.org/10.24252/iqtisaduna.v8i1.29593>
- Roslan, A. H., & Akbar, I. (2024). Pengaruh Dimensi Green Economy Terhadap Zero Waste Behaviour Intention: Persepsi Masyarakat Kabupaten Wakatobi. *Jurnal Pustaka Cendekia Hukum dan Ilmu Sosial*, 2(3), 471-479.
- Santoso, A., Damayanti, B., Firdhausi, A., Lianawati, D., Rachmah, I., D.M., N., ... & Dara, M. (2021). Penerapan Digital Marketing bagi Pelaku UMKM Pengrajin Gerabah Tanah Liat Kedungsari di Kabupaten Kediri. *Kontribusi Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 2(1), 66-74. <https://doi.org/10.53624/kontribusi.v2i1.84>
- Sinha, K. J., Sinha, S., & Sinha, B. J. (2024). Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs): The significant role and challenges in Indonesia's economy. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(3), 20824.
- Supriaddin, N., & Roslan, A. H. (2025). The Moderating Role of Agricultural Product Categories in the Relationship Between Digital Marketing Competencies and Marketing Performance. *Journal of Global Innovations in Agricultural Sciences*, 1199-1208.
- Vikaliana, R., Panjaitan, R., Adam, E., Fasa, M. I., & Roslan, A. H. (2021). Brand loyalty in the smartphone user's: The role of brand credibility and consumer convenience. *Studies of Applied Economics*, 39(4).
- Yusuf, H., & Roslan, A. H. (2024). Service quality, corporate image, and customer trust: Revealing interconnected dynamics among hotel customers. *Journal of Community Service and Society Empowerment*, 2(03), 365-373.
- Yusuf, H., & Roslan, A. H. (2025). The Role of Ownership and Attention in Driving Buying Intention in E-Commerce.