

From Good Products To Visible Brands: A Marketing Management Perspective On Local Agribusiness Actors In A Peri-Urban Village Of North Sumatra

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Abstract

Local agribusiness products in peri-urban villages often have good quality but limited market visibility. This study examines the marketing management practices of local agribusiness actors through the stages of the marketing management process, namely market analysis, strategic planning, marketing mix implementation, and marketing control. The study was conducted in Medan Krio Village, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, using a quantitative descriptive design supported by field observation. Data were collected from 50 agribusiness actors selected purposively through a 40-item questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale and analysed using mean scores, standard deviations, agreement percentages, and interval categories. Observations from a mentoring programme held on 21 July 2026 were used for triangulation. The results show an imbalance in the marketing mix. Product strategy obtained the highest score (M = 4.76), while promotion was the weakest marketing function (M = 3.72), followed by segmentation, targeting, and positioning (M = 4.05) and digital distribution (M = 4.16). The use of social media for promotion was the only indicator in the moderate category (M = 2.86), with 40% of respondents disagreeing. Perceived marketing performance was very high (M = 4.39), but profit growth after digital marketing was its weakest indicator (M = 3.86). Field observation revealed that packaging, branding, and record-keeping were weaker than self-assessments suggested. The study concludes that local agribusiness actors are product-oriented rather than market-oriented and recommends strengthening positioning, brand-based promotion, pricing based on cost calculation, and regular marketing evaluation

Keywords: Marketing Management, Marketing Mix, Promotion Strategy, Brand Positioning, Marketing Performance

INTRODUCTION

Marketing management is the process of choosing target markets and acquiring, keeping, and growing customers through creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value (Kotler & Keller, 2016). For small agribusiness enterprises in rural areas, this process is often reduced to producing and selling. Products are made according to habit, sold through familiar channels such as local markets, collectors, and regular customers, and promoted mainly by word of mouth. As a result, many local products that are good in quality remain known only within their immediate surroundings. Villages located on the outskirts of large cities illustrate this paradox clearly: they are close to large urban markets and have adequate infrastructure, yet their products often lose in competition with manufactured goods that have stronger brands, better packaging, and wider distribution.

The marketing management process can be understood as a sequence of analysis, planning, implementation, and control (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Analysis requires market information about customers, competitors, and trends. Planning requires segmentation, targeting, and positioning so that the business knows whom it serves and how it wants to be perceived. Implementation is carried out through the marketing mix of product, price, place, and promotion. Control requires evaluation of marketing results so that strategies can be adjusted. Market-oriented firms that generate market intelligence, disseminate it internally, and respond to it tend to perform better (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990). Marketing capabilities, meaning the ability to combine resources to carry out these activities, are therefore a source of competitive advantage (Day, 1994; Vorhies & Morgan, 2005).

Digitalisation has changed how each stage of the process is executed. Consumers now search for, compare, and discuss products through mobile phones before buying (Kotler et al., 2017), and digital marketing has become a two-way channel for communication, distribution, and measurement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Digitalisation has been shown to mediate the effect of segmentation and targeting on purchase decisions (Awani et al., 2025), and digital marketing influences the purchase decisions of local SMEs both directly and through electronic word of mouth (Tarigan et al., 2025). During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing pushed many MSMEs to move online (Dayu et al., 2023), and MSMEs that engaged in digital commerce proved more resilient (Setiawan et al., 2021). Studies in North Sumatra also examine how digital technologies relate to the performance of small food businesses (Hasibuan et al., 2024),



while electronic money has been found to increase MSME income (Situmorang et al., 2025).

On the product side, product innovation and brand identity are central to differentiation. Product innovation contributes to competitive advantage and marketing performance (Satrin NY et al., 2025), brand knowledge shapes how customers respond to marketing activities (Keller, 1993), and storytelling on social media helps build an authentic brand image (Febrina & Fikri, 2025). Behind these activities lies the management of market knowledge. Knowledge that is acquired, stored, shared, and applied allows small businesses to learn from customers and from one another (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and knowledge management has been identified as an important element of MSME resilience (Ichsan & Yusuf, 2021). Mentoring programmes around Medan have shown that branding, digital marketing literacy, and social media use can be improved through structured training (Lubis et al., 2026; Perwitasari et al., 2024; Wadly et al., 2025).

Although these studies examine individual marketing elements, few describe how village agribusiness actors perform across the entire marketing management process. Such a mapping is needed to show which marketing functions are already strong and which ones constrain competitiveness. This study addresses that need in Medan Krio Village, Sunggal District, Deli Serdang Regency, a peri-urban village whose residents cultivate rice, maize, chili, vegetables, and fruits and process them into snacks, traditional cakes, chips, and herbal drinks. The objectives are to: (1) describe the marketing management practices of local agribusiness actors in terms of promotion and digital distribution, market knowledge management, and product and brand strategy; (2) describe their perceived marketing performance; and (3) identify the marketing functions that should be prioritised to improve the competitiveness of local agribusiness products.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive design supported by field observation. The research was conducted in Medan Krio Village, Sunggal District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, from April to July 2026. The population comprised agribusiness actors in the village, including farmers, members of farmer and women farmer groups, and MSMEs processing agricultural products. Respondents were selected purposively with two criteria: having managed an agribusiness for at least one year and carrying out marketing activities, either conventionally or digitally. A total of 50 respondents completed the questionnaire.

The instrument consisted of 40 statements grouped into four marketing management dimensions, each with 10 indicators: (1) promotion and digital distribution, adapted from the digital marketing indicators of Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019); (2)



market knowledge management, adapted from the knowledge processes described by Alavi and Leidner (2001); (3) product and brand strategy, adapted from Kotler and Keller (2016) and Rogers (2003); and (4) marketing performance, which reflects financial and non-financial outcomes such as sales, market reach, customer loyalty, and sustainability (Morgan et al., 2002; Homburg et al., 2012). Each statement was measured on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data were analysed descriptively using the mean score, standard deviation, and percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with each indicator. Mean scores were interpreted using the interval criteria in Table 1, with an interval width of $(5 - 1) / 5 = 0.80$ (Sugiyono, 2019). To view the results through a marketing management lens, the indicators were then regrouped into the stages of the marketing management process, namely analysis, planning, implementation of the marketing mix, and control, and the mean of each group was calculated.

Mean Score Interval	Category
1.00 – 1.80	Very low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
3.41 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very high

Table 1. Mean Score Interpretation Criteria

To triangulate the survey results, the research team conducted field observation and a participatory mentoring programme with agribusiness actors on 21 July 2026. The programme covered digital marketing and branding, agribusiness development based on local potential, and business management, including production cost calculation and pricing, followed by hands-on practice in creating business social media accounts, digital catalogues, product photographs, labels, and packaging designs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Promotion and Digital Distribution

The promotion and digital distribution dimension obtained a mean score of 3.97 (high category) and was the lowest of the four dimensions (Table 2). The strongest indicators relate to distribution and marketing control: the use of courier and delivery services ($M = 4.56$; 92% agree), evaluation of online marketing results ($M = 4.50$; 84% agree), and the use of customer testimonials as social proof ($M = 4.32$; 80% agree).

Proximity to the city and the availability of delivery services make physical distribution relatively easy, and actors appear to monitor responses to their online activities.

Code	Indicator	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Category
DM1	The business uses social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook) to promote products	2.86	1.50	56	Moderate
DM2	Promotional content is uploaded online on a regular basis	3.78	1.43	68	High
DM3	Attractive product photos/videos are used for online marketing	3.90	1.31	76	High
DM4	Digital marketing helps the business reach a wider range of customers	4.30	1.13	80	Very high
DM5	Marketplaces (Shopee, Tokopedia, Lazada) are used for sales	3.76	1.15	68	High
DM6	Delivery/courier services are used to support online sales	4.56	0.84	92	Very high
DM7	Customer inquiries are answered quickly through digital media	3.76	1.44	68	High
DM8	The respondent understands how to determine target markets through digital media	3.92	0.99	80	High
DM9	Customer testimonials are used to increase buyer trust	4.32	1.08	80	Very high
DM10	Online marketing results are evaluated (buyers, comments, likes, sales)	4.50	0.91	84	Very high
	Dimension mean	3.97			High

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Promotion and Digital Distribution (n = 50)

The weakest indicator was the use of social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook for promotion ($M = 2.86$), the only indicator in the moderate category. Only 56% of respondents agreed, while 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the standard deviation ($SD = 1.50$) was the largest in the instrument. Regular content uploads

(M = 3.78), quick responses to customer inquiries (M = 3.76), and the use of marketplaces (M = 3.76) were also relatively low. From a marketing management perspective, promotion is the element of the marketing mix that makes a product known, understood, and remembered (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The polarised responses indicate that the community is divided between actors who already communicate with customers digitally and actors who still rely on direct selling. Consistent with Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), the problem is not the availability of channels but the consistency, quality, and interactivity of marketing communication.

Field observation reinforced this finding. Before the mentoring programme, many participants used social media only for personal communication, and most did not yet have business accounts, digital catalogues, or a content plan. Constraints included differences in digital literacy, limited smartphone capacity, and limited time. Since basic telecommunication infrastructure is available, the promotional gap reflects managerial habits and skills rather than access. Collaboration with young people offers one practical solution: a study of local food MSMEs in Medan found that Generation Z collaborators, social commerce, and micro-influencers help translate local narratives into authentic digital content and build trust between producers and consumers (Sanny, 2025).

Market Knowledge Management

Market knowledge management obtained a mean score of 4.39 (very high category), as shown in Table 3. The highest indicators were participation in training or mentoring (M = 4.68; 92% agree), a clear division of tasks (M = 4.60), routine sharing of business experience (M = 4.58), and neat storage of customer and supplier information (M = 4.58). In marketing management terms, these practices correspond to the dissemination of market intelligence within a community (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Farmer groups, women farmer groups, and MSME communities function as informal channels through which information about prices, suppliers, and buyers circulates.

Code	Indicator	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Category
KM1	The respondent and team often learn new production/marketing techniques	4.18	0.98	86	High
KM2	Business knowledge is well documented (production, sales, recipes)	4.10	1.18	74	High
KM3	Business experience is routinely shared with group members/other MSMEs	4.58	0.91	90	Very high

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Code	Indicator	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Category
KM4	Training or mentoring is attended to improve business skills	4.68	0.82	92	Very high
KM5	Newly acquired knowledge is applied to improve product quality	4.28	1.13	80	Very high
KM6	The business has a clear division of tasks according to skills	4.60	0.93	88	Very high
KM7	Past experience is used as evaluation material for improvement	4.34	1.10	80	Very high
KM8	Important customer and supplier information is stored neatly	4.58	1.03	88	Very high
KM9	Up-to-date information on agribusiness market trends is easy to obtain	4.18	1.12	78	High
KM10	A culture of learning and innovation is built in the business	4.42	1.03	84	Very high
	Dimension mean	4.39			Very high

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Market Knowledge Management (n = 50)

The weaker indicators were documentation of business knowledge ($M = 4.10$), access to information on market trends ($M = 4.18$), and learning new techniques ($M = 4.18$). These are precisely the activities that support market analysis, the first stage of the marketing management process. Field observation found that transaction records were largely kept manually and some were not documented at all, making it difficult to calculate profits and plan marketing activities. Market knowledge in the community therefore remains largely tacit and oral. Converting it into explicit records of sales, customers, and market prices (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) would provide the information base required for segmentation, pricing, and evaluation.

Product and Brand Strategy

Product and brand strategy recorded the highest dimension mean (4.58; very high category), as presented in Table 4. All respondents strongly agreed that they maintain quality standards of hygiene, taste, and durability ($M = 5.00$), and nearly all reported creating products from local village materials ($M = 4.94$; 98% agree), being open to customer input ($M = 4.84$), and adopting new production technology ($M = 4.82$). These

results show that actors place strong emphasis on the product element of the marketing mix, and that local materials and traditional recipes form a potential basis for differentiation (Porter, 1985).

Code	Indicator	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Category
IP1	New products are developed according to market needs	4.38	1.07	84	Very high
IP2	Products have diverse variants (taste, size, type)	4.66	0.89	90	Very high
IP3	Packaging innovation is carried out to make products more attractive	4.36	1.14	80	Very high
IP4	Products have added value compared with competitors	4.18	1.26	76	High
IP5	Product quality standards (hygiene, taste, durability) are observed	5.00	0.00	100	Very high
IP6	New technology is tried to improve the production process	4.82	0.48	96	Very high
IP7	The business is open to customer input for product improvement	4.84	0.51	94	Very high
IP8	Product innovations are created from local village materials	4.94	0.31	98	Very high
IP9	Products already have an easily recognizable label/brand	4.34	1.21	82	Very high
IP10	Product innovation has increased business sales	4.32	1.02	78	Very high
	Dimension mean	4.58			Very high

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Product and Brand Strategy (n = 50)

The lower-scoring indicators, however, are those that connect the product to the market: perceived added value compared with competitors (M = 4.18), the impact of innovation on sales (M = 4.32), an easily recognisable label or brand (M = 4.34), and packaging innovation (M = 4.36). Field observation showed that many products were still sold fresh or in simple processed forms with plain packaging, incomplete label

information, and no trademark, logo, slogan, or product story. Actors evaluate their products from the producer's perspective, whereas customers evaluate them through visible brand elements (Keller, 1993). Brand identity matters because it shapes consumers' intention to visit and buy from local businesses (Tarigan et al., 2025). The near-ceiling scores on several indicators should also be interpreted cautiously because self-reported data are susceptible to social desirability bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Marketing Performance

Perceived marketing performance obtained a mean score of 4.39 (very high category), as shown in Table 5. Respondents reported consistent product quality ($M = 4.88$), a growing base of regular customers ($M = 4.64$; 90% agree), a widening marketing network ($M = 4.54$), and products becoming known outside the village ($M = 4.40$). The strong customer base reflects relationship-based loyalty, which is an important non-financial marketing asset. It is also consistent with evidence that product quality is a significant driver of customer satisfaction even when other factors, such as price perception, are not (Sinambela et al., 2025).

Code	Indicator	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Category
PA1	Sales have increased in the last year	4.36	1.10	84	Very high
PA2	Products are becoming known outside the village	4.40	1.11	84	Very high
PA3	Profits have increased after using digital marketing	3.86	1.37	66	High
PA4	The business has greater growth opportunities than before	4.14	1.26	74	High
PA5	Products are able to compete with products from outside the village	4.36	1.14	80	Very high
PA6	The business has a growing base of regular customers	4.64	0.85	90	Very high
PA7	Product quality is maintained consistently	4.88	0.39	98	Very high
PA8	The marketing network is increasingly wide	4.54	0.99	86	Very high

Code	Indicator	Mean	SD	Agree (%)	Category
PA9	The business is increasingly stable and sustainable	4.40	1.07	82	Very high
PA10	The respondent is optimistic that the business will continue to grow	4.30	1.13	80	Very high
	Dimension mean	4.39			Very high

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Marketing Performance (n = 50)

The weakest performance indicator was profit growth after using digital marketing (M = 3.86; 66% agree), which was clearly lower than sales growth (M = 4.36; 84% agree). This gap shows that higher sales do not automatically lead to higher profits, possibly because packaging, shipping, and promotion costs rise with online sales. It also reveals a gap in the price element of the marketing mix, which was not directly captured by the instrument but was identified as a capability gap during mentoring. Marketing performance should therefore be monitored using both financial and non-financial indicators (Homburg et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2002), and prices should be set on the basis of production cost calculations.

A Marketing Management Process Lens

Table 6 regroups the indicators into the stages of the marketing management process. The results reveal an imbalance. Product strategy is the strongest function (M = 4.76), followed by marketing control and evaluation (M = 4.42) and market information management (M = 4.38). In contrast, promotion is the weakest function (M = 3.72), followed by segmentation, targeting, and positioning (M = 4.05) and digital distribution (M = 4.16). The price element could not be assessed because it was not included in the instrument; however, the mentoring programme identified production cost calculation and pricing as capabilities that still needed strengthening.

Marketing Management Function	Stage	Indicators	Mean	Category
Market information management	Analysis	KM8, KM9	4.38	Very high
Segmentation, targeting and positioning	Planning	DM8, IP4	4.05	High

Marketing Management Function	Stage	Indicators	Mean	Category
Product strategy	Implementation	IP1, IP2, IP5, IP6, IP8	4.76	Very high
Brand and packaging	Implementation	IP3, IP9	4.35	Very high
Place (digital distribution)	Implementation	DM5, DM6	4.16	High
Promotion (marketing communication)	Implementation	DM1, DM2, DM3, DM9	3.72	High
Customer service and relationship	Implementation	DM7, IP7	4.30	Very high
Marketing control and evaluation	Control	DM10, KM7	4.42	Very high

Table 6. Marketing Management Functions of Local Agribusiness Actors

This pattern suggests that local agribusiness actors are product-oriented rather than market-oriented. They invest effort in making good products but pay less attention to defining target segments, positioning their products against competitors, and communicating value consistently to customers. In Narver and Slater's (1990) terms, customer and competitor orientation are weaker than production-related capabilities. Because marketing capabilities, rather than production capabilities alone, drive competitive advantage (Day, 1994; Vorhies & Morgan, 2005), closing this gap is essential for local products to compete in urban markets.

The mentoring programme on 21 July 2026 provided initial evidence that these functions can be strengthened. Table 7 summarises the conditions observed before and after the programme. A post-programme evaluation of 15 participants showed that most respondents chose agree or strongly agree for the satisfaction and usefulness statements.

Marketing Aspect	Before the Programme	After the Programme
Promotion	Promotion carried out conventionally	Participants able to use social media as a promotional medium

Marketing Aspect	Before the Programme	After the Programme
Product and brand	Simple packaging without branding	Products begin to use more attractive packaging and logos
Marketing information	No business records	Participants begin to apply simple financial records
Marketing management skills	Limited knowledge of business management	Participants understand business administration and simple financial management
Marketing partnership	Limited university–village relationship	Cooperation established between the university, village government, and business actors

Table 7. Marketing Conditions Before and After the Mentoring Programme

Managerial Implications

Based on these findings, several marketing management priorities can be proposed for local agribusiness actors and their facilitators. First, in the planning stage, actors should define specific target segments, such as urban families seeking healthy snacks or travellers buying souvenirs, and formulate a clear positioning based on local materials and traditional recipes. Second, in the product element, attention should shift from product quality alone to brand elements that customers can see, including names, logos, informative labels, and packaging suitable for delivery. Third, in the price element, prices should be set on the basis of production cost calculations that include packaging and shipping costs, with tiered prices for retail, resellers, and wholesale buyers. Fourth, in the place element, actors can combine offline channels with marketplaces and delivery services while maintaining consistent prices across channels. Fifth, in the promotion element, social media should be managed with a regular content schedule, product storytelling, testimonials, and fast responses, and collaboration with village youth can accelerate content production. Finally, in the control stage, simple monthly reports on sales, customers, and profits should be used to evaluate and adjust marketing strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that local agribusiness actors in the peri-urban village studied have strong product foundations but weak market-facing marketing functions. Product strategy ($M = 4.76$), market knowledge management ($M = 4.39$), and perceived marketing performance ($M = 4.39$) are in the very high category, whereas promotion (M

= 3.72), segmentation, targeting, and positioning ($M = 4.05$), and digital distribution ($M = 4.16$) are the weakest functions. The use of social media for promotion is the only indicator in the moderate category, and profit growth lags behind sales growth. These findings show that the main challenge is not producing good products but managing the marketing process so that good products become visible, well-positioned, fairly priced, and consistently communicated brands. Village governments, universities, and related agencies are recommended to provide continuous, practice-based mentoring focused on positioning, brand-based promotion, cost-based pricing, and regular marketing evaluation. This study is limited to descriptive analysis of self-reported data from one village, and the instrument did not measure pricing. Future research should include pricing indicators, use larger samples across several villages, apply inferential methods such as structural equation modelling, and incorporate objective marketing performance data.

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