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DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR MSMES JEPARA GO INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *This study analyzes the digital marketing strategies implemented by furniture small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Jepara, Indonesia, in their efforts to enter the Malaysian market and identifies the opportunities and challenges associated with internationalization. A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted within a constructivist paradigm, using the 7P Marketing Mix as the theoretical framework. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations of Jepara furniture SMEs using purposive sampling, while secondary data were obtained from Ministry of Trade export data, LPEI, and Malaysian e-commerce reports. The findings indicate that Jepara furniture SMEs are shifting from costly physical exhibitions toward integrated digital marketing strategies. Key practices include premium product positioning supported by carving-process video storytelling, value-based pricing, cross-border distribution through the Shopee International Platform and TikTok Shop Malaysia, and virtual showrooms using augmented reality. Malaysia offers opportunities as a premium ethnic niche market due to cultural similarities, e-commerce growth, and preferential tariff arrangements under ATIGA. However, SMEs face challenges related to skilled human resources, digital literacy, SVLK certification costs, logistics, and competition from China, Vietnam, and Malaysia. The study proposes a Jepara Hybrid Go-International model integrating digital 7P marketing, cross-border e-commerce, cultural differentiation, and ecosystem support to strengthen the internationalization of Jepara furniture SMEs.*

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Furniture SMEs, Go International, Jepara, Malaysia*

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Introduction

The furniture industry is an important component of Indonesia's creative and manufacturing sectors, with Jepara widely recognized as a major centre of carved furniture production. Jepara furniture is particularly distinguished by its teak and mahogany products, traditional carving expertise, and increasing adoption of modern production technologies such as computer numerical control (CNC), three-dimensional modelling, and robotics. The furniture industry is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), many of which continue to combine traditional craftsmanship with technological adaptation to improve production efficiency and competitiveness (Jepara Regency Government, 2024). As of August 2024, 154 Jepara exporters were reported to have exported wooden furniture to 55 countries, generating an export value of USD 15.5 million, demonstrating the increasingly international orientation of the local furniture industry (Jepara Regency Government, 2024). The scale of the industry is also reflected in its contribution to Indonesia's broader furniture export sector, which was valued at approximately USD 3.5 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 5–6 billion by 2030 (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

Internationalization provides an important opportunity for Jepara furniture SMEs to expand their market beyond Indonesia. Among potential destinations, Malaysia represents a strategically relevant market because of its geographical proximity, similarities in Malay-Islamic culture, appreciation of wood carving, and established bilateral trade relations. These cultural similarities are particularly relevant to Jepara furniture products incorporating traditional carving, Islamic-inspired floral motifs, and other culturally familiar design elements (Journal of Islamic Architecture, 2020; Jurnal ISBI, 2024). The regional trade environment also provides opportunities for Indonesian furniture exporters. Through the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), Indonesia and Malaysia are among the ASEAN-6 countries that have eliminated import duties on 99.65% of intra-ASEAN tariff lines, although specific products remain subject to applicable tariff schedules and rules of origin (ASEAN, 2025). This regional trade integration can reduce tariff barriers and facilitate the movement of eligible Indonesian furniture products into the Malaysian market.

The Malaysian market is particularly relevant given its existing demand for imported furniture and its growing domestic furniture and e-commerce sectors. The study identifies Malaysia as a substantial furniture market, projected to reach approximately USD 3.9 billion by 2033, while Malaysia's online furniture market continues to expand (GlobeNewswire, 2023; eCommerceDB, 2024). In addition, Malaysia imported furniture from Indonesia worth USD 74.96 million in 2023 according to the trade data cited in the present study (Trading Economics, 2024). These conditions indicate an established commercial relationship between the two countries and suggest opportunities for Jepara furniture SMEs to develop market positions in Malaysia, particularly within consumer segments that value traditional craftsmanship, cultural authenticity, and premium furniture products.

However, international market entry remains challenging for Jepara furniture SMEs. Previous research and industry reports identify several structural obstacles, including raw materials, technology, capital, human resources, and marketing capabilities. The shortage of skilled workers has become particularly significant as larger industries compete for available labour, encouraging some furniture businesses to increase their adoption of machinery and production technologies. At the same time, the cost of conventional promotional activities, particularly physical exhibitions, can create a substantial financial burden for SMEs (Betanews, 2024; Wawasan, 2024). Digital literacy also remains a concern, with many furniture businesses yet to

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fully exploit the potential of e-commerce and other digital channels (Andika, 2024). In the Malaysian market, additional challenges include competition from China, Vietnam, and local Malaysian producers, certification requirements, logistics constraints, and differences in digital platform characteristics (AgroIndonesia, 2024; Legency Group, 2025).

Digital transformation has consequently become increasingly important for the international marketing of Jepara furniture. Rather than relying primarily on costly physical exhibitions, SMEs can use social media, websites, online marketplaces, digital advertising, video storytelling, and cross-border e-commerce platforms to communicate product value and reach international customers. Previous research on Jepara furniture entrepreneurs found that digital platforms can support branding, distribution, promotion, and consumer interaction, while product quality, premium pricing, visual communication, and interactive features are important components of digital marketing strategies (Andika, 2024). Digitalisation can therefore extend the market reach of SMEs while reducing some of the geographical and promotional constraints associated with conventional international marketing.

The 7P Marketing Mix provides a useful framework for examining this transformation because digital international marketing requires SMEs to integrate product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence rather than treating marketing activities as separate functions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the Jepara furniture context, digital implementation may involve premium product positioning supported by visual storytelling of the carving process, value-based pricing, cross-border digital distribution, social-media promotion, bilingual customer service, streamlined ordering and delivery processes, and digital or augmented-reality-based representations of furniture products (Andika, 2024). Cross-border platforms such as Shopee International Platform, TikTok Shop, Alibaba.com, and InaExport may further provide channels for B2C and B2B international market development (Shopee Indonesia, 2024; Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

Against this background, this study aims to analyze the digital marketing strategies implemented by furniture SMEs in Jepara in their efforts to enter the Malaysian market and to identify the specific opportunities and challenges associated with this internationalization process. The study further examines how the 7P Marketing Mix can be integrated with cross-border digital platforms and cultural differentiation to develop a practical approach for strengthening the international competitiveness of Jepara furniture SMEs. By focusing specifically on the Jepara–Malaysia context, the study contributes to the discussion of MSME digital marketing by extending the application of the 7P Marketing Mix to cross-border e-commerce and by highlighting the role of cultural characteristics, particularly Islamic carving traditions, in international market positioning.

Landscape of MSMEs Funiture Jepara

Jepara is known as the center of carved furniture since the Kartini era. The furniture industry consists of SMEs with 5-15 workers, using teak wood and mahogany, with technology shifting from manual to CNC, 3D modeling, and robotics for efficiency. The Jepara Regency Government is preparing 300 MSMEs for export by 2025, with a focus on Troso carved and woven furniture, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which has a network of 114 countries (Aktualitas.id, 2025). As of August 2024, Jepara had 154 wooden furniture exporters exporting to 55 countries, with an export value of USD 15.5 million, while 30 wood handicraft exporters exported to 25 countries, generating USD 610,000 in export value. Nationally, around

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35% of Indonesia's furniture exports come from Jepara, with a national value of USD 3.5 billion by 2024 (RahayuBiz E-Commerce, 2025).

Research identifies five classic obstacles confronting MSMEs in the Jepara furniture industry: access to raw materials, technology adoption, capital, human resources, and marketing. According to APKJ Chairman Andriyan Susanto, the sector is facing a labor shortage as large industries absorb thousands of workers, compelling MSMEs to adopt greater mechanization and invest in production technologies to sustain their operations (Umi Nurfaizah, 2026). Marketing also remains a significant challenge, as the high cost of participating in exhibitions—despite their importance for connecting MSMEs with potential buyers—can limit their promotional opportunities (Wawasan.co, 2019). In addition, digital literacy and technology adoption remain relatively weak. For example, only two entrepreneurs had obtained VLO/SVLK certification in 2008, while many MSMEs have yet to fully exploit e-commerce platforms to expand their market reach.

Literature Review

The Ultimate Platform for Go International

MSMEs in the Jepara furniture industry can leverage several digital channels to expand their international market access. For B2C regional markets, platforms such as Shopee International Platform (SIP) and Lazada Global Marketplace enable MSMEs to reach consumers beyond Indonesia. Through SIP, for example, MSMEs can send their products to Shopee's local warehouse in Indonesia, while Shopee manages the international shipping process to selected overseas markets, including Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand (Kampus Shopee, 2021). Fashion, home furnishings, and sports-related products have reportedly emerged among the most popular export categories, with Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore representing key destination markets (Youngster, 2025). For B2B transactions, MSMEs can utilize international platforms such as Alibaba.com and Global Sources, as well as InaExport, an export-oriented platform operated by Indonesia's Ministry of Trade, to connect with overseas buyers and distributors. Social commerce provides another avenue for market expansion through platforms such as TikTok Shop and Instagram. In 2024, TikTok Shop recorded an estimated gross merchandise value (GMV) of USD 2.724 billion in Malaysia, with a market share comparable to Lazada, highlighting the growing importance of social-commerce platforms in the regional digital marketplace (Irawan Djoko Nugroho, 2025). Beyond commercial platforms, government-supported initiatives can further facilitate internationalization. The Indonesia Eximbank (LPEI), for instance, provides services such as business matching and market intelligence to help Indonesian MSMEs strengthen their competitiveness and connect with potential international markets (Indonesia Eximbank, 2024). Collectively, these channels provide MSMEs with multiple pathways to overcome geographical and market-access barriers, ranging from direct consumer sales and B2B buyer connections to social-commerce engagement and institutional export support.

Opportunities in the Malaysian Market

Malaysia represents an attractive regional market for furniture products, supported by the continued expansion of the furniture industry, e-commerce, and consumer demand for home furnishings. The Malaysian furniture industry is projected to reach approximately USD 3.9 billion by 2033, expanding at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.9% (Research and Markets, 2024). Within the broader furniture market, the Malaysian Home Furniture and Bedding segment is estimated at USD 316 million in 2025 and is projected to reach USD 411

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million by 2032, representing a CAGR of 3.8% (ECDB, 2025). The increasing importance of digital channels further strengthens market accessibility for foreign MSMEs. In 2024, online sales accounted for approximately 67.3% of Malaysia's outdoor furniture market and are projected to increase to 82% by 2029, while kitchen furniture recorded an online share of 68.7% (ECDB, 2025). More broadly, Malaysia's e-commerce sector generated approximately RM1.29 trillion in 2024, equivalent to 23.4% of the country's GDP, demonstrating the substantial role of digital commerce in the national economy (Business Today, 2026). The expansion of regional digital payment connectivity also facilitates cross-border transactions, with QR-payment transactions under the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore-Thailand regional framework reaching MYR 348.3 million by 2024. These developments indicate that Malaysian consumers are increasingly accustomed to purchasing products through digital channels, creating opportunities for Jepara furniture MSMEs to access the Malaysian market without relying exclusively on conventional physical distribution and retail networks.

Specific Opportunities for Jepara Furniture

Several market conditions provide specific opportunities for Jepara furniture MSMEs seeking to enter or expand in Malaysia. First, cultural and aesthetic similarities provide a potentially strong basis for market acceptance. Jepara's traditional woodcarving incorporates Islamic-inspired floral motifs, calligraphy, and geometric elements, which have parallels with Malay decorative traditions in Malaysia, where Islamic influences are also reflected in floral and geometric carving patterns (Yusof et al., 2021). At the same time, concerns regarding the declining transmission of traditional carving skills among younger generations in Malaysia, as younger people increasingly pursue technology-oriented activities, may create a niche for distinctive handcrafted and culturally inspired furniture from Jepara (Widagdo et al., 2024). This potentially positions Jepara products within the premium ethnic, heritage, and artisanal furniture segment.

Second, ASEAN trade integration provides a favorable tariff environment. Under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), many intra-ASEAN tariff lines have been eliminated or reduced substantially. ASEAN-6 countries recorded an average tariff of only 0.04% on intra-ASEAN trade in 2014 (Bedano, 2018), while Indonesia and Malaysia have progressively eliminated tariffs across virtually all intra-ASEAN tariff lines, with 99.65% reported as eliminated. This relatively low-tariff environment can reduce the cost disadvantage associated with cross-border trade and support the competitiveness of Indonesian furniture products in Malaysia.

Third, Malaysia already demonstrates significant demand for Indonesian furniture. Malaysia imported approximately USD 74.96 million worth of furniture-related products from Indonesia in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2026). By comparison, Indonesia imported approximately USD 21.36 million of furniture-related products from Malaysia in 2022 (Trading Economics, 2026). Although the figures refer to different years and should therefore not be interpreted as a precise bilateral trade balance for the same period, they nevertheless indicate an established Malaysian market for Indonesian furniture and suggest that Indonesian suppliers already have market acceptance in Malaysia.

Fourth, Malaysia's urban middle-class segment presents an additional opportunity for differentiated Jepara products. Urbanization, rising disposable income, and changing lifestyle preferences are contributing to demand for contemporary home furnishings that combine functionality, aesthetic appeal, sustainability, and cultural identity. This trend creates

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opportunities for Jepara MSMEs to move beyond conventional mass-market furniture by offering products that combine traditional craftsmanship with contemporary designs, sustainable materials, and digital customization. Such positioning could enable Jepara furniture to target higher-value consumer segments rather than competing solely on price.

Challenges in Malaysia

External Challenges

Jepara furniture MSMEs face several external challenges when entering the Malaysian market, particularly intense competition, compliance requirements, logistics constraints, and the fragmented digital-platform environment. First, competition is intense, particularly from China and other established furniture-producing countries. Malaysia imported approximately USD 233.16 million of wooden furniture under HS 940360 in 2024, of which USD 190.51 million, or approximately 81.7%, originated from China. Vietnam supplied approximately USD 8.76 million, while Indonesia supplied USD 8.68 million (Rika Amelia, 2026). This indicates that Indonesian furniture exporters compete in a Malaysian market where Chinese suppliers have a substantial presence, while Vietnamese suppliers also represent an established regional competitor. In the bedroom-furniture segment, China accounted for approximately USD 25.43 million of Malaysia's USD 37.02 million imports in 2024, compared with USD 2.02 million from Indonesia and USD 1.84 million from Vietnam (Rika Amelia, 2026). Consequently, Jepara MSMEs cannot rely solely on price competition and may need to differentiate through craftsmanship, cultural identity, customization, product quality, and sustainability.

Second, non-tariff and certification requirements can increase the compliance burden for Indonesian exporters. The Indonesian Timber Legality Assurance System (SVLK) forms part of Indonesia's timber legality and traceability framework. Although such certification supports the credibility and legality of Indonesian timber products, compliance and certification costs can be particularly burdensome for smaller enterprises. Industry stakeholders have argued that the cost and implementation of SVLK can reduce the competitiveness of Indonesian furniture SMEs when competing with suppliers from countries where comparable downstream requirements may differ (AgroIndonesia, 2017). For Jepara MSMEs, this creates a need to treat certification and traceability not merely as regulatory obligations but also as market-access capabilities that can be communicated to Malaysian buyers.

Third, logistics and shipment scale remain important constraints for MSMEs. Small furniture producers may lack sufficient order volumes to fill a full container, making less-than-container-load (LCL) shipments necessary when serving overseas markets. Although LCL enables smaller exporters to consolidate shipments with other cargo, the additional handling, consolidation, and per-unit transportation costs can reduce price competitiveness. This issue is particularly relevant to Jepara furniture because handcrafted and customized products may involve relatively low shipment volumes but comparatively high product dimensions and logistics costs.

Fourth, Malaysia's digital marketplace is highly competitive and increasingly fragmented. Shopee remains a major e-commerce platform in Malaysia, while TikTok Shop has rapidly expanded its role in product discovery and social commerce, with Lazada continuing to serve a substantial consumer base. A 2026 consumer study reported that 83% of respondents had purchased through Shopee, compared with 64% through TikTok Shop and 42% through Lazada (Legency, 2025). These figures are survey-based rather than measures of market share, and

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therefore should not be interpreted as equivalent to platform transaction shares. Nevertheless, they illustrate the need for Jepara MSMEs to understand platform-specific consumer behavior and potentially adopt a multi-channel strategy rather than depending on a single marketplace.

Internal Digital Challenges

In addition to external market conditions, Jepara MSMEs face internal digital-capability constraints that may limit their ability to exploit the Malaysian market. Digital marketing expertise remains limited among many small producers, while the regeneration of skilled artisans is also a concern. Traditional reliance on physical exhibitions and buyer meetings can impose substantial promotional costs, particularly for firms with limited marketing budgets. At the same time, MSMEs may not yet fully exploit digital tools such as search-engine optimization (SEO), short-form video, live-stream commerce, digital advertising, and augmented-reality (AR) product visualization. These capabilities are increasingly relevant for furniture because consumers often need to evaluate product design, dimensions, materials, craftsmanship, and suitability for their living spaces before making a purchase. Consequently, the digital challenge is not simply the adoption of e-commerce platforms; it involves developing the human capabilities, digital content, product visualization, and customer-engagement systems required to convert online visibility into actual sales.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach to examine the opportunities and challenges faced by Jepara furniture MSMEs in expanding into the Malaysian market, with particular emphasis on market characteristics, trade conditions, digital export channels, competitive pressures, and internal digital capabilities. The study draws primarily on secondary data obtained from academic publications, government and industry reports, international trade databases, e-commerce market reports, and relevant industry and news sources. Secondary information was systematically reviewed to identify patterns relating to Malaysian furniture demand, bilateral trade, tariff and non-tariff measures, logistics, consumer digital behavior, and the adoption of digital marketing and e-commerce platforms. In addition, industry evidence concerning Jepara's furniture sector was examined to identify key MSME constraints, including access to raw materials, technology, capital, human resources, marketing, certification, and digital capabilities. The collected evidence was organized thematically into four analytical dimensions: (1) Malaysian market characteristics, (2) specific market opportunities for Jepara furniture, (3) external challenges to market entry, and (4) internal digital challenges. Comparative analysis was then used to assess how these factors may influence the ability of Jepara furniture MSMEs to compete and establish market access in Malaysia. The findings were subsequently synthesized to identify potential market-entry implications, particularly the use of B2C marketplaces, B2B platforms, social commerce, and government-supported export facilitation mechanisms. This approach enables the study to integrate macro-level market evidence with industry-specific MSME constraints and provides a contextual basis for identifying feasible strategies for the internationalization of Jepara furniture MSMEs.

Research Findings

Austin Andika's (2024) study at Universitas Islam Sultan Agung (UNISSULA), drawing on Kotler and Keller's 7P Marketing Mix framework, found that furniture entrepreneurs in Jepara have increasingly utilized digital platforms, including social media, websites, and online marketplaces, to strengthen branding, distribution, promotion, and consumer engagement. The study further highlighted the importance of maintaining product quality, adopting premium pricing strategies, and leveraging visual communication and interactive digital features to

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enhance customer engagement and market positioning. These findings suggest that digital platforms can serve not only as promotional channels but also as strategic tools for strengthening the competitiveness and market reach of Jepara's furniture enterprises.

Based on the findings from in-depth interviews and observations of furniture MSMEs in Jepara Regency, digital transformation has contributed to a shift in marketing orientation from conventional approaches that rely heavily on costly physical exhibitions toward a more integrated digital marketing mix. This finding is consistent with Andika's (2024) study, which applied Kotler and Keller's 7P Marketing Mix framework to examine the digital marketing strategies adopted by Jepara furniture entrepreneurs. The findings indicate that digital platforms have increasingly become integral to branding, promotion, distribution, and consumer engagement, complementing rather than completely replacing conventional marketing activities.

In the context of international market expansion into Malaysia, the seven elements of the marketing mix need to be integrated and adapted to the characteristics of cross-border digital commerce. Rather than implementing each element independently, Jepara furniture MSMEs can utilize platforms such as the Shopee International Platform (SIP), TikTok Shop Malaysia, and B2B marketplaces to integrate product presentation, pricing, promotion, distribution, and customer engagement within a digital ecosystem. Product quality and distinctive teak carving can serve as key differentiation attributes, while premium pricing can reflect craftsmanship, customization, cultural identity, and perceived product value. At the same time, digital distribution can reduce geographical barriers to market access, while virtual showrooms and augmented-reality (AR) technologies can enhance product visualization and help potential Malaysian customers assess furniture designs and suitability before purchase. These digital tools therefore provide opportunities to extend the traditional 7P framework from a primarily domestic marketing context toward a digitally enabled cross-border market-entry strategy. Table 1 presents a systematic overview of how the seven elements of the marketing mix can be adapted to support the internationalization of Jepara furniture MSMEs in the Malaysian market.

Table 1: Strategy 7P Digital MSME Furniture Jepara

Elements	Implementation in Jepara	Research Findings
Product	3d photos, video of the engraving process, custom teak/mahogany, slvk certificate	Visual storytelling increases trust
Price	Premium pricing, value-based pricing	Malaysian Customers
Square	E-commerce website, Shopee, Tokopedia, Alibaba	Appreciate the authenticity of the carving
Promotion	Instagram Reels, TikTok short videos, Meta Ads, TikTok Ads, Shopee Ads	Shopee International Platform makes cross-border easy
People	Admin sosial media, customer service bilingual	TikTok reached 92.07 million users in early 2022 in Indonesia
Process	Pre-order, LCL freight, KITE, QRIS, Shopee Pay	Digital HR is still limited
Physical Evidence	Testimoni video, showroom virtual, AR visualization	Shopee Flexi allows you to set prices/promotions from Indonesia

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The findings indicate that digitalization has become an important determinant of business sustainability for Jepara furniture MSMEs rather than merely an optional marketing activity. The transition from conventional marketing practices toward web-based e-commerce and social media enables MSMEs to expand their market reach, engage customers more continuously, and potentially strengthen customer loyalty. Previous research has also reported an increase in orders among MSMEs adopting e-commerce websites and social media as part of their marketing activities (Achyar & Pratama, 2021). In the context of Jepara's furniture industry, digital marketing therefore extends beyond promotion: it can function as a business-survival mechanism by reducing dependence on costly physical exhibitions, widening access to potential buyers, and helping MSMEs respond to labor shortages and increasing price competition.

The findings suggest that the traditional 7P Marketing Mix can be strengthened through its integration with cross-border e-commerce and social-commerce platforms. For the Malaysian market, Jepara furniture MSMEs can combine premium product storytelling, value-based pricing, digital distribution, and interactive promotion. For example, short videos demonstrating carving processes and craftsmanship can communicate product authenticity and perceived value, while platforms such as the Shopee International Platform (SIP) and TikTok Shop can facilitate market access and customer engagement. Interactive technologies, including augmented-reality (AR)-based product visualization, may further enhance customers' ability to evaluate furniture remotely. Based on these findings, this study proposes the “Jepara Hybrid Go-International” model, which integrates distinctive Jepara products, premium-value positioning, cross-border digital distribution, social-commerce promotion, and technology-enabled product visualization. The model emphasizes the integration of the 7Ps rather than treating each marketing element as an isolated activity.

The findings indicate that the most distinctive opportunity for Jepara furniture in Malaysia lies in differentiated and premium niche segments rather than direct competition in the mass-market, price-sensitive segment. Jepara's traditional carving craftsmanship, teak furniture, Islamic-inspired motifs, and cultural heritage provide attributes that can support a differentiated market position. Timber-legality certification, including SVLK-related credentials where applicable, can further strengthen product traceability and provide assurance to buyers concerned with responsible sourcing. Accordingly, the strategic implication is to emphasize differentiation rather than cost leadership, positioning Jepara furniture around authenticity, craftsmanship, cultural identity, customization, and responsible timber sourcing. Such positioning may allow MSMEs to compete on perceived value rather than attempting to match the prices of large-scale producers.

The findings further suggest that the principal constraints faced by Jepara furniture MSMEs are not necessarily related to product quality or craftsmanship, but to the wider business ecosystem required for internationalization. Key constraints include limited access to international buyers, certification and compliance costs, logistics and shipment-scale limitations, and gaps in digital marketing capabilities. Addressing these barriers therefore requires interventions beyond individual firm-level marketing activities. Potential ecosystem support includes export-oriented MSME training and mentoring, the Shopee Export MSME Campus, Indonesia Eximbank (LPEI) Business Matching and market-intelligence services, export-oriented financing such as KUR, and institutional facilitation by relevant government agencies to connect Indonesian furniture MSMEs with Malaysian buyers. Strengthening these support mechanisms could help

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bridge the gap between Jepara's existing production capabilities and its ability to convert those capabilities into sustainable cross-border market access.

Therefore, the main findings of this study are threefold. First, Jepara furniture MSMEs are undergoing a shift from conventional marketing toward digital marketing, moving beyond their traditional reliance on costly physical exhibitions to an integrated 7P Marketing Mix supported by social media, websites, and online marketplaces. This digital transformation expands opportunities for market reach, customer engagement, and direct interaction with potential buyers.

Second, the Malaysian market presents opportunities for Jepara furniture MSMEs in differentiated and premium ethnic segments, particularly for products emphasizing traditional craftsmanship, teak wood, Islamic-inspired carving, cultural identity, and product authenticity. B2C market access can be facilitated through cross-border platforms such as the Shopee International Platform (SIP) and TikTok Shop, while B2B opportunities can be pursued through platforms such as Alibaba.com and InaExport. These channels provide alternative routes for MSMEs to reach Malaysian consumers and business buyers without relying exclusively on conventional physical distribution and exhibition-based marketing.

Third, the principal barriers to internationalization are associated with digital capability, human resources, certification, and competitive pressure. Jepara MSMEs face limited digital marketing capabilities, difficulties in regenerating skilled artisans, and the financial burden associated with timber-legality certification and compliance. They also compete with furniture suppliers from Malaysia, Vietnam, China, and other producing countries that operate under different regulatory and certification environments. Collectively, these findings suggest that successful entry into the Malaysian market requires not only distinctive and high-quality products, but also stronger digital capabilities, efficient certification and logistics arrangements, and access to appropriate export-support mechanisms.

Conclusion and Contributions

The findings indicate that Jepara furniture MSMEs possess distinctive cultural capital and product attributes that are relevant to the Malaysian market, particularly through their traditional craftsmanship, teak furniture, and Islamic-inspired carving. These opportunities are further supported by ASEAN trade integration and the continued expansion of Malaysia's digital economy and e-commerce market. The study demonstrates that digitalization can strengthen the conventional 7P Marketing Mix by integrating social media, websites, online marketplaces, cross-border e-commerce, and technology-enabled product presentation. However, sustainable internationalization requires more than digital market access. Jepara MSMEs need to strengthen digital human-resource capabilities, develop effective use of cross-border platforms such as the Shopee International Platform (SIP) and TikTok Shop, and leverage government and institutional support to address certification, logistics, financing, and market-access barriers.

This study contributes to the MSME digital-marketing literature by extending the application of the 7P Marketing Mix from a predominantly domestic marketing context to a cross-border e-commerce setting. It highlights how the seven marketing elements can be integrated with digital platforms, cross-border distribution, social commerce, and technology-enabled product visualization. The study also addresses a context-specific research gap by examining the internationalization of Jepara furniture MSMEs into Malaysia while incorporating cultural

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factors, particularly the market relevance of traditional Islamic-inspired carving and local craftsmanship.

Based on the findings, the study proposes the Jepara Hybrid Go-International Model, which integrates distinctive product positioning, value-based pricing, cross-border digital distribution, social-commerce promotion, digital customer engagement, and institutional support. The model provides a practical framework that can potentially guide MSME development and internationalization initiatives involving furniture enterprises in Jepara. At the policy level, the findings highlight the importance of coordinated support from the Jepara Regency Government, the Indonesian Ministry of Trade, Indonesia Eximbank (LPEI), and other relevant institutions in strengthening digital capabilities, facilitating buyer connections, reducing certification and logistics constraints, and improving MSMEs' readiness for cross-border e-commerce.

Strategic Recommendations

Based on the findings, several strategic recommendations are proposed to support the internationalization of Jepara furniture MSMEs in the Malaysian market. Jepara MSMEs should prioritize urban consumer segments in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Johor, particularly middle- and upper-income consumers with an interest in premium, culturally distinctive, and Islamic-inspired furniture. Market segmentation should focus not only on demographic characteristics but also on consumer preferences for craftsmanship, authenticity, customization, sustainability, and cultural identity.

MSMEs should adopt a multi-channel digital strategy combining B2C, social commerce, B2B, and owned-media channels. As an initial strategic configuration, resources could be allocated approximately across Shopee Malaysia/SIP, TikTok Shop and live commerce, B2B platforms such as Alibaba.com and InaExport, and an SEO-optimized corporate website incorporating AR-based product visualization. The proposed allocation should be treated as a flexible starting point and adjusted according to actual customer acquisition costs, engagement, conversion rates, and sales performance.

Marketing content should communicate the distinctive value of Jepara furniture through visual storytelling. Recommended content includes videos demonstrating the hand-carving process, information on timber legality and certification, customer testimonials, collaborations with Malaysian designers, and virtual showroom experiences. Such content can help communicate craftsmanship and authenticity while reducing the information gap associated with purchasing high-value furniture remotely.

MSMEs should develop Malaysia-specific pricing that incorporates platform fees, delivery costs, taxes or applicable charges, and customer expectations. Cross-border platform functions such as Shopee's Flexi export arrangements can be evaluated to determine suitable pricing and fulfilment options. For smaller orders, LCL consolidation should also be considered to reduce the burden associated with shipping partially filled containers.

Jepara MSMEs should actively participate in government- and industry-supported internationalization programmes that facilitate business matching, buyer access, export readiness, and market intelligence. International furniture exhibitions and buyer-matching programmes can complement digital channels by providing opportunities to establish relationships with Malaysian importers, distributors, designers, and retailers. Collaboration with Indonesian government agencies, export-support institutions, and Malaysian industry

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partners should therefore form part of a broader ecosystem strategy rather than relying solely on individual MSME capabilities.

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