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BUSINESS PLANNING, MARKETING AND DIGITALIZATION FOR COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURIAL TRANSFORMATION: A CASE STUDY OF IKAN BEKOK ENTREPRENEURS IN BESUT, TERENGGANU

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Abstract: *Community-based traditional food entrepreneurship contributes to local economic development while preserving cultural knowledge and product heritage. However, traditional food entrepreneurs often face challenges in business planning, marketing, market expansion, digital adoption, and production constraints. This study examines the implementation of Module Business Planning, Marketing and Digitalization under the Community Entrepreneurial Transformation Project involving ikan bekok entrepreneurs in Besut, Terengganu. A case study approach was employed based on the documented activities, learning materials and outputs of the module. The analysis focused on five interconnected areas: business planning, the 4P marketing framework, SWOT analysis, digital payment, and technological innovation. The findings indicate that business planning provides a foundation for transforming ikan bekok from a traditional community product into a more systematically managed entrepreneurial product. The 4P framework emphasizes product quality, pricing, distribution and promotion, while SWOT analysis identifies internal capabilities and external market conditions. Digitalization through QR payment and Soundbox introduces more efficient transaction practices, while the Smart Heat House concept demonstrates the potential of IoT to address weather-related production constraints. The study proposes an integrated*

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community entrepreneurial transformation framework linking business planning, marketing, strategic analysis, digitalization and innovation. The findings highlight the importance of integrating traditional product knowledge with contemporary entrepreneurial capabilities to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of community-based food enterprises.

Keywords: *community entrepreneurship; business planning; marketing; digitalisation; traditional food; ikan bekok*

Introduction

Traditional food entrepreneurship represents an important form of community-based economic activity in Malaysia. Traditional food products are frequently embedded within local history, cultural identity, family knowledge and community practices, and processing traditions of this kind generate income and employment that strengthen the economic resilience of communities while keeping cultural heritage in active use rather than treating it as something merely preserved. Consequently, the commercialization of traditional food products can generate economic benefits while simultaneously contributing to the preservation of local heritage.

Despite this potential, traditional food entrepreneurs operate within an increasingly competitive business environment. Malaysian evidence shows that small, rural, traditional food producers continue to rely heavily on direct selling and rarely use social media or formal digital channels to market their products, and this same body of work links the gap to a broader shortfall in basic business capability. There are many operators lack even formal business registration or systematic financial management. This is echoed in adjacent studies of informal food entrepreneurs, where the central barrier to growth is not the product itself but the entrepreneur's limited business and marketing skills, financial resources and human capital.

The challenge is particularly significant for community-based entrepreneurs because entrepreneurial activity is often conducted with limited financial, technological and managerial resources. At the same time, traditional food possesses characteristics that can provide a competitive advantage. Authentic recipes, distinctive taste, traditional preparation methods and cultural identity can differentiate traditional products from mass-produced alternatives, and Malaysian research on the transformation of street-hawker businesses into more formalized, "modernized" operations makes a comparable point: successful transformation depends on entrepreneurs learning to balance authenticity against the demands of a more commercial operating model, not on abandoning the traditional product. The product of *ikan bekok* sits squarely in this tension. Therefore, the transformation of traditional food entrepreneurship should not involve replacing traditional practices entirely. Instead, transformation should involve combining traditional product strengths with contemporary business management, marketing and technological capabilities.

Business planning represents an important starting point for this transformation. A business plan enables entrepreneurs to clarify their objectives, identify target markets, understand costs, determine pricing and develop appropriate distribution and promotional strategies. From a strategic entrepreneurship perspective, entrepreneurial activity involves simultaneous opportunity-seeking and advantage-seeking behavior, and small, resource-constrained ventures are typically more effective at identifying opportunities than at building the competitive advantage needed to convert those opportunities into performance (Ireland, Hitt, & Sirmon,

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2003), which is precisely the gap module's business-planning component is designed to close for *ikan bekok* entrepreneurs.

Issues related to Traditional food entrepreneurship

Traditional food entrepreneurs may possess valuable product knowledge and cultural resources but lack systematic business capabilities required for commercial expansion. This creates a gap between product capability and business capability. In the case of *ikan bekok* entrepreneurs, the product itself represents an important traditional asset. However, through the conducted module identified weaknesses involving limited business and marketing experience, limited production capacity, weak brand recognition and dependence on weather.

These issues suggest that entrepreneurial transformation requires interventions beyond product production. Entrepreneurs need to understand how to position the product, determine prices, access markets, promote the product, manage transactions and potentially adopt technology to address production constraints. Digitalization represents an opportunity but also requires appropriate knowledge and practical exposure.

Existing research has examined traditional food entrepreneurship, community entrepreneurship, digital entrepreneurship and the commercialization of heritage products. Studies have highlighted the importance of authenticity, marketing, innovation, social capital and digital adoption. However, there remains a need for more contextualized studies examining how business planning, marketing and digitalization are integrated within a community-based entrepreneurial intervention involving a specific traditional food product.

Research Objective

The study aims to examine the role of business planning, marketing and digitalization in supporting community entrepreneurial transformation among *ikan bekok* entrepreneurs in Besut, Terengganu. There are five (5) research objectives that need to be achieved;

1) To examine the role of business planning in strengthening *ikan bekok* community entrepreneurship.
2) To analyze the application of the 4p marketing framework.
3) To identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting *ikan bekok* entrepreneurship.
4) To examine the role of digitalization through QR payment and soundbox technology.
5) To explore the potential of technological innovation in addressing production challenges.

Research Questions

The are five (5) research questions that need to be answered for this study;

1) RQ1: How does business planning support the entrepreneurial transformation of ikan bekok entrepreneurs?
2) RQ2: How can the 4P marketing framework strengthen the market potential of ikan bekok?
3) RQ3: What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats influence ikan bekok entrepreneurship?
4) RQ4: How can digital technologies such as QR payment and Soundbox support business operations?
5) RQ5: How can technology and innovation contribute to addressing production challenges?

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Literature Review

Community Entrepreneurship

Community entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial activities that are closely embedded within a local community and utilize local resources, knowledge, relationships and capabilities to generate economic and social value. The foundational theorization of this idea comes from Peredo and Chrisman's (2006) concept of the community-based enterprise (CBE), which argues that in this form of entrepreneurship, natural and social capital become integral and inseparable from economic considerations. This means, the community itself takes on the roles of entrepreneur and enterprise, pursuing sustainable local development rather than individual wealth creation alone. This distinguishes community entrepreneurship from purely commercial entrepreneurship, where economic return is typically the dominant, if not sole, objective.

Subsequent research has extended Peredo and Chrisman's (2006) framework beyond their original focus on impoverished communities in the global South, applying it to community-driven enterprises in developed-economy and mixed-resource settings, and confirming that social capital like trust, shared cultural values and local relationships continues to substitute for the financial and technical resources such ventures typically lack. This is directly relevant to *ikan bekok* entrepreneurs in Besut where their venture is not simply a collection of individual micro-enterprises but a community product whose transformation depends on shared local knowledge, grant support and coordinated participation, consistent with the CBE model's premise that community and enterprise are mutually constitutive rather than separable.

Traditional Food as an Entrepreneurial Resource

Traditional food can be regarded as an entrepreneurial resource because it contains characteristics that may differentiate a product from competitors. Authenticity, traditional preparation methods, taste and historical associations can provide symbolic and functional value. This claim is increasingly grounded in the entrepreneurship literature: authenticity has been identified as a source of competitive advantage for niche and craft-based ventures, and recent work explicitly frames entrepreneurial authenticity as a strategic asset within resource-based view theory, meeting the value, rarity, inimitability and non-substitutability criteria needed for sustainable advantage. In craft and heritage-based ventures more specifically, research on the interplay between materiality, authenticity and tradition shows that successful entrepreneurs treat heritage not as a constraint on modernization but as a resource to be actively managed alongside innovation, technology adoption and scaling that balanced the "old" and the "new" rather than trading one off against the other.

Evidence from traditional food producers reinforces this point empirically. A study of vendor-producers of traditional food products found that innovation and tradition are not inherently in conflict. The producers, who maintained strong ties to traditional knowledge sources could still be classified as innovative, provided they combined that knowledge with managerial capability, brand development and market orientation. This is precisely the aims of the combination module targets by pairing *ikan bekok's* traditional identity with formal business planning and branding activities. The implication is that entrepreneurial transformation should not remove the traditional character of *ikan bekok*. Instead, the traditional identity should be strengthened through branding, packaging, labelling and marketing. This strategy the literature increasingly frames not as a compromise but as the deliberate strategic use of authenticity as a resource.

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Business Planning and Entrepreneurial Capability

Business planning provides entrepreneurs with a systematic framework for managing business activities. It assists entrepreneurs in identifying objectives, assessing markets, estimating costs, determining pricing and planning distribution and promotion. From the perspective of strategic entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial activity involves both opportunity seeking and advantage seeking (Ireland, Hitt, & Sirmon, 2003). Opportunity recognition alone is insufficient if entrepreneurs lack the capability to convert opportunities into sustainable business activities.
Complementary research on institutional pressures around planning has shown that founders sometimes write business plans less because the plans genuinely guide decisions and more because banks, investors or support agencies expect to see one. The plans are then frequently set aside or ignored once written, which raises the question of whether a plan changes behavior or merely satisfies a stakeholder ritual. A more recent integrative review confirms that this lack of consensus persists in the present decade: whether planning helps still depends heavily on the venture's stage, the volatility of its environment and, increasingly, on the entrepreneur's underlying motivation for planning in the first place.

Marketing and the 4P's Framework

The marketing mix provides entrepreneurs with a structured mechanism for considering four fundamental dimensions of marketing: product, price, place and promotion. It is a framework first codified by McCarthy (1960) and still the dominant teaching and practitioner tool in marketing management more than sixty years later. For traditional food products, the product dimension extends beyond taste and includes quality, hygiene, packaging, labelling, brand identity and consumer perception. Price needs to reflect production costs, desired margins and market competitiveness. Place concerns how the product reaches customers, including physical and online distribution channels. Promotion concerns how the entrepreneur communicates the product's value to target consumers.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is useful for entrepreneurs because it encourages consideration of both internal and external business conditions. Strengths and weaknesses are generally associated with internal capabilities, while opportunities and threats relate to external environmental conditions. For community-based entrepreneurs, SWOT analysis can reveal how traditional strengths can be leveraged to exploit digital opportunities while addressing operational weaknesses.

Digitalization and Entrepreneurial Transformation

Digitalization can be understood as the integration of digital technologies into business activities. It can affect marketing, communication, payment, record keeping, customer engagement and operational processes. However, digital adoption requires appropriate knowledge and support. The module responds to this requirement through the introduction of QR payment and Soundbox.

Innovation and Dynamic Capabilities

Dynamic Capabilities Theory explains how organizations adapt by sensing opportunities, seizing them and reconfiguring resources (Teece, 2007). The theory was developed to address a key limitation of the Resource-Based View that possessing valuable, rare and inimitable resources explains *why* a firm might sustain competitive advantage but says little about *how* firms adapt those resources as environments change (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

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Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature and summary of module, this study proposes that community entrepreneurial transformation occurs through the interaction of five components.

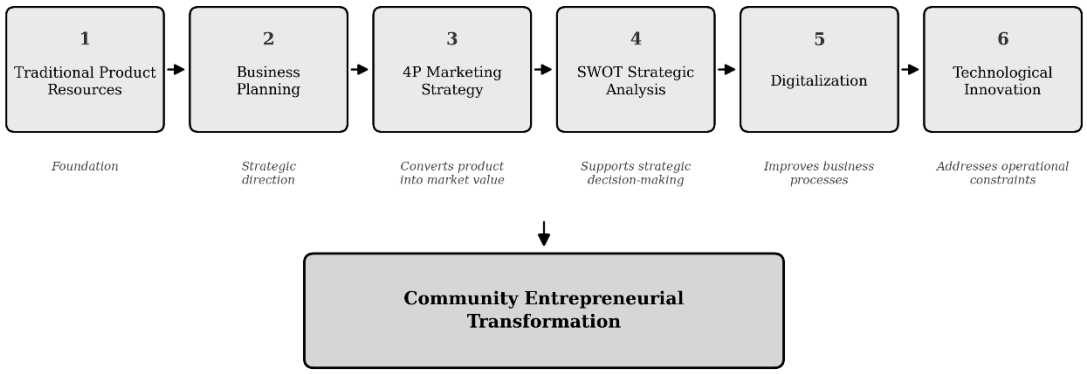


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Community Entrepreneurial Transformation

.The framework proposes that traditional product resources provide the foundation. Business planning provides strategic direction, marketing converts product characteristics into market value, SWOT analysis supports strategic decision making, digitalization improves business processes and innovation addresses operational constraints.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach focusing on the implementation of Module 3 under the Community Entrepreneurial Transformation Project in Besut, Terengganu. The case study approach is appropriate because the study examines an entrepreneurial development intervention within its real-world community context. The unit of analysis is the Module 3 entrepreneurial development intervention, with specific attention to its business planning, marketing and digitalization components.

Study Setting

The programme was implemented in Besut, Terengganu, on 10 February 2026. It was organized by UiTM Kelantan Branch in collaboration with Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB) under the Community Entrepreneurial Transformation Project. The module was designed to provide participants with knowledge and skills in business planning, marketing, business analysis and digitalization.

Data Sources

The study draws on the documented materials associated with Module 3, including module content, documented descriptions of learning activities, 4P marketing materials, SWOT analysis materials, documentation relating to QR payment, Soundbox technology materials and documentation relating to the Smart Heat House/IoT concept.

Data Analysis

The documented content was organized according to five analytical themes: business planning, marketing and 4P, SWOT analysis, digitalization, and innovation and technological transformation. The themes were interpreted in relation to entrepreneurship and business

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management literature. Because the available documentation does not contain pre- and post-test scores, participant income data or statistical measures, the findings are presented as a qualitative case analysis of the intervention content and documented entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities.

Research Ethics and Data Integrity

The study does not disclose personal participant information. The analysis focuses on the entrepreneurial intervention, its learning components and the documented business context.

Findings

Business Planning as the Foundation of Transformation

Module 3 explicitly focuses on developing participants' ability to plan their businesses systematically. The purpose was particularly relevant to strengthening *ikan bekok* as a community product with added value and competitiveness. This is significant because traditional food production can sometimes be based on established routines rather than formal business planning.

The module therefore introduced a transition from traditional product production to systematic business management. This transformation requires entrepreneurs to consider target customers, value proposition, pricing, distribution, promotion, transaction management and production constraints.

Marketing Transformation through the 4P Framework

The module introduced the 4P framework to help participants understand the interconnected nature of product, price, place and promotion.

Product

The product discussion emphasized quality, cleanliness, unique taste, texture, branding, packaging and labelling. These dimensions are important for *ikan bekok* because traditional authenticity needs to be communicated effectively to modern consumers.

Price

Participants were introduced to pricing based on production costs, profit margin, competitive prices and discount strategies. This is important because pricing decisions directly affect sustainability.

Place

The module addressed both physical and online distribution channels. This represents a shift from geographically limited selling towards potentially broader market access.

Promotion

Promotion involved advertising, sales promotion and communication with target customers. This is especially important because traditional food products often depend on storytelling and product differentiation to communicate their uniqueness.

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SWOT Analysis of *Ikan Bekok* Entrepreneurship

The module managed to identify several points that related to SWOT as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Grant funding without debt	Limited business experience
Unique traditional recipe	Limited marketing experience
Good taste	Limited production capacity
Participant motivation	Brand not yet widely recognised
Low operating costs	Dependence on weather
Opportunities	Threats
Demand for traditional products	Increasing competition
Demand for halal products	Rising raw material prices
TikTok	Changing consumer preferences
Shopee	Labelling requirements
Government support	Hygiene requirements
Seasonal markets	Weather-related production challenges

Source: Module 3 documentation.

Digital Transformation through QR Payment

The introduction of QR payment represents an important first step in digital transformation. Participants were introduced to digital payment as a mechanism that can simplify transactions, reduce cash usage, improve transaction recording and make buying and selling more convenient.

Soundbox as a Practical Digital Technology

Soundbox represents another practical technological intervention. The device provides a voice notification when payment is received. This allows entrepreneurs to verify transactions without constantly checking their mobile phones. Technology demonstrates that successful digitalization does not necessarily require complex systems.

IoT-Based Innovation and Production Challenges

The Smart Heat House concept provides a different dimension of digital transformation. Unlike QR payment, which addresses transactions, IoT-based technology addresses production. The module identified dependence on weather as one of the weaknesses affecting the ikan bekok business. The Smart Heat House concept provides a potential technological mechanism for improving production consistency and reducing weather dependence.

Integrated Findings

Table 1: the main function and potential from the components in module 3

Component	Main Function	Transformation Potential
Business Planning	Provides direction	Systematic decision making
4P Marketing	Develops market strategy	Better positioning and market access
SWOT	Identifies strategic conditions	More informed decisions
QR & Soundbox	Improves transactions	Digital business operation
IoT/Smart Heat House	Addresses production constraints	Production modernisation

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Table 1 summarises the five components delivered through Module 3 and their respective contributions to the transformation of *ikan bekok* entrepreneurship. Business planning provides entrepreneurs with a structured direction for decision making, enabling them to move from ad hoc operational choices toward systematic planning of costs, markets and resources. The 4P marketing framework builds on this foundation by translating strategic direction into a concrete market-facing strategy, improving how the product is positioned and how effectively it reaches target customers. SWOT analysis complements both components by helping entrepreneurs identify their internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats, thereby supporting more informed strategic decisions rather than decisions based on intuition alone.

The remaining two components address the operational dimension of the business. QR code and Soundbox technology improve the efficiency and reliability of sales transactions, moving entrepreneurs toward more formalised digital business operations and reducing dependence on cash-only, manual transaction methods. The IoT-enabled Smart Heat House addresses a specific production constraint highlighting weather-dependent sun-drying by modernising the drying process itself, thereby increasing production consistency and capacity.

Taken together, these five components indicate that entrepreneurial transformation in this case did not occur through a single intervention but through the cumulative interaction of strategic, marketing, analytical, digital and technological capabilities. The three strategic components (Business Planning, 4P Marketing, SWOT) collectively strengthen entrepreneurs' decision-making capacity, while the two technology-based components (QR/Soundbox, IoT/Smart Heat House) address concrete operational constraints in transaction handling and production. This distinction suggests that community entrepreneurial transformation, as demonstrated by the *ikan bekok* case, requires both improved strategic thinking and improved operational capability, with neither being sufficient on its own to produce sustained business transformation.

Discussion

One of the most important implications of Module 3 is the transformation of how *ikan bekok* can be conceptualized. Through business planning and marketing, the product can increasingly be understood as a branded, market-oriented and technology-supported community enterprise. This transformation does not require abandoning traditional identity. Instead, traditional identity becomes part of the product's competitive proposition.

The SWOT analysis suggests that limited marketing experience is a weakness. This is important because having a good traditional product does not automatically create market competitiveness. Entrepreneurs must know how to identify target customers, communicate product value, package the product, determine appropriate prices, select distribution channels and use digital platforms.

Digital transformation does not necessarily happen immediately through advanced technologies. The Module 3 experience demonstrates an incremental pathway: from QR Payment to Soundbox, to Digital Marketing lead to Digital Management and lastly IoT Production. This gradual approach may be more realistic for community entrepreneurs than expecting immediate adoption of sophisticated technologies.

An important implication is that technology adoption should be problem-driven rather than technology-driven. QR payment addresses transaction efficiency; Soundbox addresses payment

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verification; digital platforms address market reach; and IoT-based technology addresses weather-dependent production.

The findings support an integration of strategic management and entrepreneurship theory in explaining community entrepreneurial transformation. From a strategic entrepreneurship perspective, transformation required entrepreneurs to simultaneously recognise opportunities and build the strategic capacity. It is start with planning, positioning and resource management needed to act on them. From a resource-based view, *ikan bekok* entrepreneurs' competitive advantage rests on a combination of tangible and intangible resources, including traditional knowledge, unique recipes, community participation, grant support, human capability, market networks and digital technology. From a dynamic capability's perspective, the module illustrates the three underlying processes of sensing opportunities and threats, seizing them through marketing and digital payment adoption, and reconfiguring production through technologies such as Io, suggesting that sustainable transformation depends not on any one resource or capability alone, but on the ongoing interaction between them.

For entrepreneurs, the findings point to the value of a simple annual business plan covering target market, product strategy, pricing, distribution, promotion, production, technology and financial management. For community entrepreneurship programmes, this implies that training should move beyond motivational content to practical, applied components likes; business planning, marketing, digital marketing, financial management, digital payment, branding, packaging, production technology and performance monitoring. For government and support agencies, the case suggests that financial support alone is insufficient: grants provide resources, but structured training and ongoing mentoring are what allow entrepreneurs to use those resources strategically. For universities, the findings point to a continuing role as knowledge partners, contributing training, digitalisation support, product development, market analysis, technology transfer and mentoring beyond the life of a single project.

More broadly, traditional food products such as *ikan bekok* contribute to local employment, household income, cultural preservation and community identity, indicating that policy should treat traditional food as both a cultural and an economic resource rather than treating the two as separate concerns. This suggests a policy approach organised around five interlocking pillars: *product* (authenticity, quality, packaging), *market* (local, digital and broader distribution), *business* (planning, pricing, financial management), *digital* (QR payment, digital marketing, digital records) and *innovation* (technology and production improvement, including IoT) — pillars that mirror the five components identified in the study's own findings (Section 5.7) and conceptual framework (Section 3), reinforcing the internal consistency of the paper's argument from theory through to policy recommendation.

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Proposed Community Entrepreneurial Transformation Model

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework of Community Entrepreneurial Transformation for Ikan Bekok Entrepreneurs in Besut, Terengganu

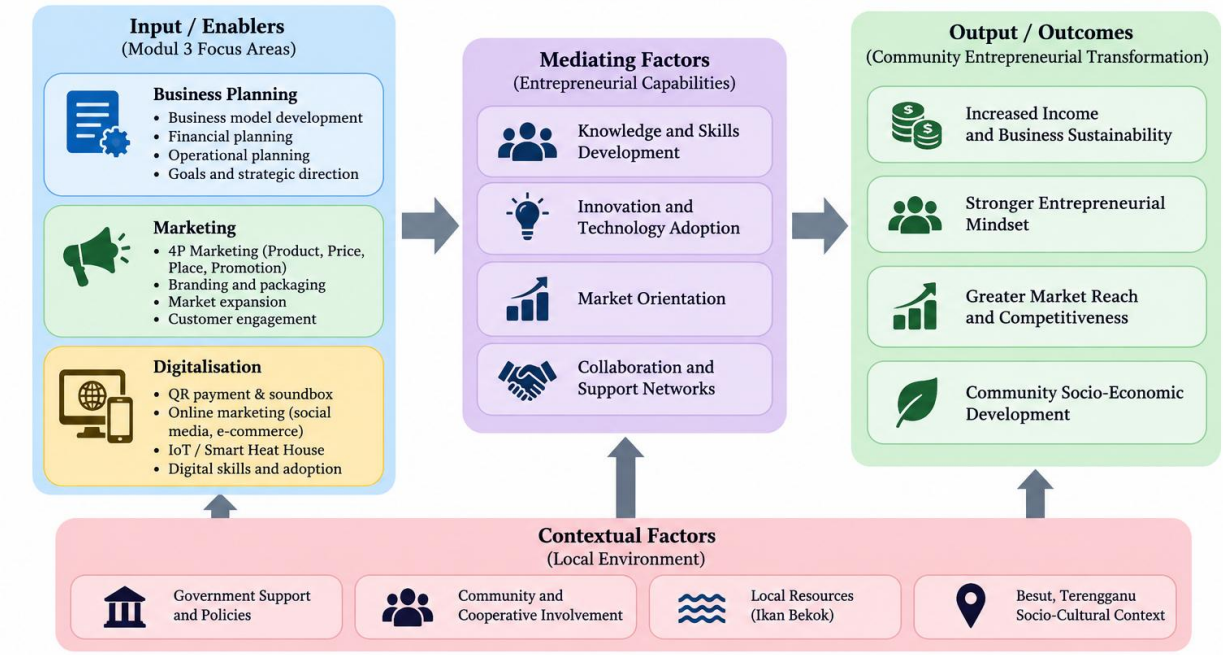


Figure 2. Community Entrepreneurial Transformation Model for Ikan Bekok Entrepreneurs

The model reflects the actual sequence and content of Module 3, moving from business planning and 4P marketing to SWOT analysis, digital payment and technology-enabled business transformation.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the study is based on the documented implementation of one entrepreneurial development module in Besut. Second, the available documentation does not provide quantitative pre- and post-training measures. Third, the study does not provide longitudinal evidence of whether participants continued using the technologies introduced. Fourth, the study does not measure changes in sales, income, customer numbers or production volume following the programme.

Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as an analysis of entrepreneurial transformation mechanisms introduced through Module 3, rather than a statistical evaluation of programme impact.

Future Research

Future studies can strengthen this research through a longitudinal mixed-method design. Before the module, researchers could measure business planning knowledge, marketing knowledge, digital readiness, digital payment adoption and production capability. Immediately after the module, knowledge gained, confidence, intention to adopt technology and understanding of 4P and SWOT could be assessed. Six and twelve months later, researchers could examine actual digital adoption, sales changes, market expansion, customer growth, production improvement,

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technology utilization, business sustainability, profitability, employment and community economic impact.

Conclusion

The present study examined business planning, marketing and digitalization as mechanisms for community entrepreneurial transformation among *ikan bekok* entrepreneurs in Besut, Terengganu. The analysis of Module 3 demonstrates that traditional food entrepreneurship requires more than the ability to produce a traditional product. Entrepreneurs need to develop systematic business planning capabilities, marketing knowledge, strategic analytical skills and digital competencies. Business planning provides the foundation for strategic decision making. The 4P framework helps entrepreneurs understand how product, price, place and promotion interact in developing market competitiveness. SWOT analysis enables entrepreneurs to recognize their strengths and weaknesses while identifying opportunities and threats. Digitalization adds another dimension to transformation. QR payment and Soundbox demonstrate how relatively simple technologies can improve everyday business transactions, while the introduction of the Smart Heat House concept illustrates how IoT can potentially address production challenges associated with weather dependency. The findings suggest that community entrepreneurial transformation should therefore be understood as an integrated process rather than a single intervention. For *ikan bekok* entrepreneurs in Besut, the process provides a potential pathway for combining traditional knowledge and contemporary entrepreneurial practices. The contribution of the study lies in demonstrating how a structured entrepreneurial development module can connect traditional food heritage, business planning, marketing and digital technology within a community entrepreneurship context. Ultimately, the sustainability of traditional community products depends on the ability to preserve what makes them unique while simultaneously adapting the way they are managed, marketed and produced. Module 3 provides an example of this transformation by connecting the traditional identity of *ikan bekok* with contemporary business planning, marketing practices, digital payment and technological innovation.

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