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Digital Communication Practices of Coastal Women in Local-Based Business Development: An Interdisciplinary Communication Perspective

Misrina
Department of Social Science Education, Pancasila and Civic Education Study Program, Khairun University, Ternate, Indonesia
sergimisrina@gmail.com

Mukhtar Yusuf
Department of Social Science Education, Pancasila and Civic Education Study Program, Khairun University, Ternate, Indonesia

Abstract

This study investigates communication practices among coastal women in developing local resource-based businesses in the coastal area of Ternate City. It focuses on digital communication, meaning-making, identity construction, network formation, and market interaction. In this study, entrepreneurship is seen as a communicative process in which women negotiate business identities, social roles, and relationships with consumers, families, communities, and institutions. This qualitative study employed a descriptive-analytical design. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Then, data were analyzed thematically through open, axial, and selective coding. The findings show that social media and digital marketplaces provide women with spaces to promote products, exchange information, build networks, and develop entrepreneurial identities. However, their communication practices are affected by differences in access to information, digital skills, institutional support, and sociocultural expectations. The study shows that communication plays an important role in shaping women's business development and economic participation in coastal communities. It also highlights the need to consider interpersonal, community, organizational, and digital communication as interconnected processes in understanding entrepreneurship in coastal areas.

Keywords : Digital communication, Coastal women, Communication practices, Social media, Entrepreneurial identity

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship in contemporary society is also a communication process because business activities depend on the production and circulation of information, meanings, identities, and relationships. From a communication perspective, networked communication reorganizes how economic actors exchange information, maintain relationships, and coordinate activities across geographic boundaries (Brush et al., 2009; Castells, 2010; Couldry, 2012). Digital platforms intensify these processes by combining interpersonal interaction, public visibility, and mediated forms of promotion. Social media therefore operates not simply as a technical channel but as an environment in which users present identities, participate in networks, and negotiate meanings (Boyd, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Van Dijck et al., 2018).

In coastal communities, women's participation in local businesses provides an important setting for examining communication as an everyday social practice. Women communicate with customers, suppliers, family members, community groups, government agencies, and other entrepreneurs through face-to-face interaction and increasingly through digital platforms. These interactions influence how products are represented, how trust is built, how information is shared, and how women position themselves as economic actors (Brahem & Boussema, 2023; Hammad & El Naggar, 2023). The communication dimension is therefore central to understanding how local businesses are developed and sustained.

Coastal women's business activities are shaped by social relationships and unequal access to communication resources. Information about markets, training, finance, government programs, and technology does not circulate equally among community members. In this context, communication is connected to questions of access, participation, visibility, and voice. Women's entrepreneurial practices can create new communicative spaces, while existing social structures may continue to influence who is heard, who controls information, and whose knowledge is recognized (Brush et al., 2009; Kabeer, 1999).

Previous studies have documented women's contributions to coastal and small-scale economic activities, including processing, trading, and local-product development. These studies provide important evidence about economic participation and structural constraints (Chambon et al., 2024; Harper et al., 2020; Kleiber et al., 2015). However, the

communication processes through which women promote products, construct entrepreneurial identities, maintain networks, and negotiate meanings around local products require more focused attention. The present study consequently places communication practices at the center of analysis rather than treating communication as a supporting element of entrepreneurship.

Social networks are particularly important because they function simultaneously as channels for information exchange and as spaces of relationship maintenance. Family and community networks can provide practical assistance, trust, knowledge, and market information, but they may also reproduce established expectations about gender roles. From a communication perspective, this dual character can be examined through patterns of interaction, information flow, participation, and negotiation of meaning (Couldry, 2012; Hammad & El Naggar, 2023; Kang, 2022).

The expansion of social media and online marketplaces creates additional communication spaces for coastal women. Through posts, photographs, short videos, direct messages, live-streaming, and customer feedback, women can communicate product value and local identity to audiences beyond their immediate communities. Such practices can extend market communication while also making local cultural knowledge more visible. Digital communication may therefore connect local economic practices with wider publics without eliminating the influence of existing social and institutional contexts (Brahem & Boussema, 2023; Castells, 2010; Jenkins, 2006; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Suseno & Abbott, 2021).

Although research on women entrepreneurs and digital marketing has expanded, a gap remains in explaining how communication practices mediate the relationship between women's agency and the social structures surrounding local businesses. A communication-oriented analysis can integrate interpersonal communication, community communication, organizational/institutional communication, and digital communication rather than locating the issue exclusively within economics, gender studies, or public policy (Brush et al., 2009; Iwu et al., 2023; Kabeer, 1999; Kang, 2022).

Accordingly, this study investigates how coastal women use and negotiate communication practices in developing local resource-based businesses in Ternate City. It asks how digital and face-to-face communication support business development, how women construct entrepreneurial

identities and local-product meanings, and what communication barriers shape their participation. The study is expected to contribute to interdisciplinary communication scholarship by connecting digital communication, community interaction, networked communication, and local cultural meaning-making in a coastal context.

Table 1. Selected Communication Literature and Relevance to the Study

No.	Author & Year	Communication Focus	Key Concept	Relevance to This Study
1	Castells (2010)	Networked communication	Communication networks	Explains how networked communication reshapes interaction and economic coordination.
2	Couldry (2012)	Digital media as social practice	Meaning-making and mediated interaction	Supports analysis of everyday digital practices and communication processes.
3	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)	Social media communication	Interaction and user-generated content	Provides a basis for understanding social media as a space for mediated engagement.
4	Boyd (2014)	Networked publics	Identity, visibility, and social interaction	Helps explain how women present identities and interact with audiences online.
5	Braun & Clarke (2006)	Qualitative communication research	Thematic analysis	Provides the methodological basis for identifying patterns and themes in interview and observation data.

The study focuses on communication as the analytical entry point for understanding coastal women's entrepreneurship. Rather than treating business development as solely an economic or institutional phenomenon, the study examines how communication practices mediate access to information, relationships, identity, product representation, and participation in local and digital networks.

2. Method

This qualitative study employed a descriptive-analytical design to investigate coastal women's communication practices in local resource-based entrepreneurial activities. The analytical focus was on how participants communicate business information, construct meanings around local products, build relationships, use digital platforms, and negotiate their roles within family and community networks. The design is consistent with an interpretive approach in which communication is examined through participants' experiences, interactions, and meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The research was conducted in the coastal area of Ternate City, selected purposively because of the high level of women's involvement in

local resource-based economic activities. The primary participants were coastal women directly involved in entrepreneurial activities. Supporting informants included community leaders and village officials who could provide contextual information about communication networks, institutional interaction, and local business development.

Data were collected using three techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences with communication, marketing practices, business strategies, information needs, and challenges in developing their businesses. Participatory observation was conducted to examine entrepreneurial activities and communication interactions in participants' natural social settings, including their interactions with customers, family members, community groups, and other business actors. In addition, document analysis was conducted to examine relevant archives, village records, business materials, social media content, and other documents that supported the interpretation of the communication practices under study.

Data were then analyzed systematically using thematic analysis techniques, which consisted of the following stages:

1. Data transcription involved converting interview recordings and field notes into textual data.
2. Open coding identified initial units of meaning related to communication practices, information access, digital interaction, identity presentation, network relations, and communication barriers.
3. Axial coding grouped related codes into broader categories by examining relationships among communication conditions, interaction patterns, social networks, and adaptive practices.
4. Selective coding integrated the categories into central themes that represented the communication processes shaping women's entrepreneurial agency. Thematic analysis was used because it provides a systematic procedure for identifying and interpreting patterned meanings in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).
5. Conclusions were developed by interpreting relationships among themes to produce a communication-centered understanding of coastal women's business development.

In terms of data validity, the study used source and method triangulation and member checking with informants to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Triangulation compared information obtained from different participants and data-collection techniques, while member checking was used to clarify whether the researchers' interpretations were consistent with participants' accounts (Birt et al., 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

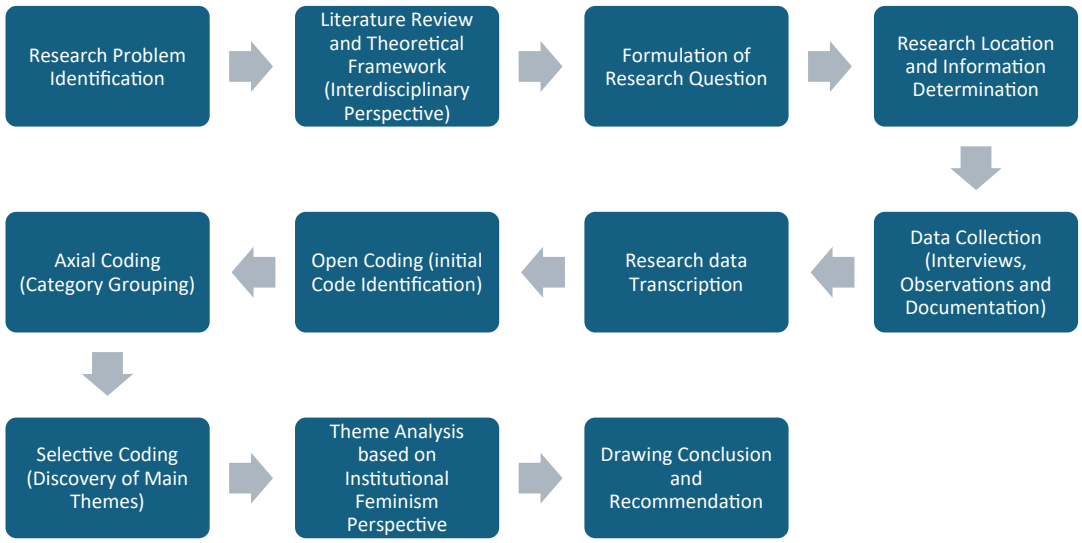

Figure 1. Research Flowchart

Data were analysed using a thematic analysis consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This approach systematically organized qualitative data to produce main themes that represent the research findings.

The open coding stage covered identifying and labelling units of meaning emerged from interviews, observations, and documentation. In this stage, data transcripts were examined in depth to identify recurring keywords, phrases, or statements relevant to the research focus. Some of the emerging initial code are limited access to capital, dual roles of women,

family and community networks, independent marketing strategies, lack of policy support, and adaptation of a local resource-based economy.

The codes were descriptive in nature and even they had not been organized into specific categories.

In the axial coding stage, initial codes that have related meanings were grouped into more conceptual categories. This grouping was based on the cause-and-effect relationships, contextual conditions, and impacts of each category. The axial coding found structural barriers, which include limited capital, policy access, and institutional support; social networks, including the role of family, community, and informal relationships in supporting women's economic activities; and adaptive strategies, covering marketing innovation, the use of simple technology, and independent business management. It can be said that coastal women's experiences are influenced by the surrounding social and institutional structures.

The last stage, selective coding integrated all categories into a core theme that served as the primary focus of the research. Its central theme connects all categories, namely women's agency, which is reflected in the coastal women's ability to make economic decisions, negotiate roles within the family and community, and develop businesses based on local potential.

This core theme is reinforced by two supporting themes, namely institutional inequality and the paradox of social networks, which limit and support women's entrepreneurial practices.

3. Results

The results of analysis revealed that coastal women's agency emerges through a complex negotiation process among institutional structures, local policies, and social networks. However, institutional structures and local policies do not fully support women's needs, especially in terms of access to capital and business training.

Meanwhile, social networks, especially family and community serving as social capital allows women to survive and develop their businesses. This indicates paradox of social networks, which can be both a source of support and a social burden.

Coastal women applied adaptive strategies which become a concrete manifestation of their agency in responding to structural constraints. This finding confirms that coastal women's entrepreneurship is not only

economic activities but also social practices reflecting power relations and gender negotiations in the local context.

Local potential-based entrepreneurs shaped the economy, society, and culture. The following section elaborates on women's involvement in managing various potential local sectors:

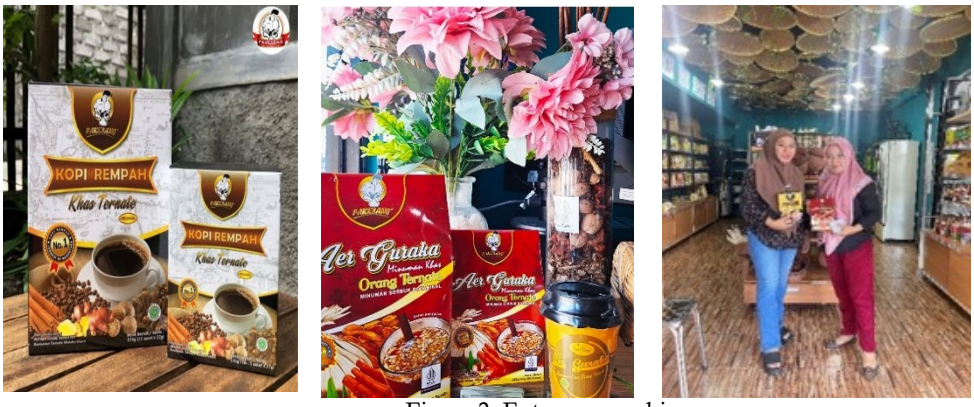

Figure 2. Entrepreneurship

The "Pakesang" business is managed by young female entrepreneurs, Ummi Salamah, who transforms various local spices into economically valuable products. In an interview, she explained the cultural significance of "Pakesang":

"Pakesang originates from the traditional culinary community of Ternate, which has long cultivated crops such as sago and coconut for daily consumption and ceremonial purposes." This dish holds cultural and symbolic importance, often served during extended family gatherings, celebrations, and traditional events.

The modern commercialization of Pakesang began in the early 2000s, when women in the Salero, Santiong, and Kalumata districts started producing it for sale in local markets and souvenir shops. The business expanded further with the growth of the local souvenir market and the promotion of MSME products by the Ternate City Cooperative and the MSME Office.

The Ternate City Cooperative and MSME Office administrative data (Ternate City Cooperative and MSME Office, 2023) reveal that more than 40 home-based businesses produce local food products, including Pakesang, with 90% of women entrepreneurs aged 30–55. In addition to Pakesang, women entrepreneurs also pioneer the production of "Tenun

Kolonel," a traditional weaving business inherited from the Buton tribe residing in Koloncucu village.



Figure 3. Weaver Communities

An ordinary woman, known as "Haji Sehat", serves as the leader of a weaver community. In interviews, she explained that she acquired her weaving skills from her parents, who were experienced weavers, specifically producing the traditional "Koloncucu" style. The Koloncucu weaving represents a product of cultural acculturation between Ternate and Buton, historically linked to the marriage of the Sultan of Ternate and a princess from the Buton Sultanate. According to local sources, the princess arrived in Ternate accompanied by attendants, including women who contributed to the weaving traditions.

The Koloncucu weaving business exemplifies the integration of cultural heritage with local economic potential. It does not only produce high-value woven products but also functions as a means of preserving cultural and ancestral heritage.

Through these activities, local communities, particularly women, experience significant economic empowerment. Despite challenges such as limited workforce regeneration and constrained market access, the weaving business continues to hold considerable potential for development, especially through innovative designs and the use of digital marketing technologies. Overall, it demonstrates how local cultural heritage can serve as a foundation for building creative, resilient, and sustainable businesses.

The next section describes a successful business initiated by women with disabilities, called "Mayana Eco-Print"



Figure 4. Mayana Eco-Print

Mayana Eco-Print was initiated by women in the Santiong and Kalumata sub-districts who acquired eco-printing skills through MSME empowerment training in 2020, organized by the Ternate City Cooperative and MSME Office. They utilize locally available resources, such as Mayana leaves, teak leaves, and other plants, to create patterns on fabric using steaming, hammering, and tying techniques.

The name "Mayana Eco-Print" is derived from the Mayana plant (Coleus atropurpureus), valued for its vibrant colors and unique shapes, which are ideal for producing natural fabric patterns. In addition, Mayana leaves hold symbolic significance in local culture, traditionally used as medicinal plants and in ceremonial practices.

This eco-print business is predominantly run by households from lower-middle-class backgrounds and exemplifies a creative business that integrates art, cultural heritage, and environmental awareness.

Although Mayana leaves are widely available, the quality of the resulting colors and patterns is highly dependent on the dyeing and fabric processing techniques. Many business owners lack experience in advanced eco-printing methods, including the use of natural fixatives and color composition. Nevertheless, pioneering entrepreneurship among women

with disabilities is rapidly expanding, gaining recognition and market acceptance at local, national, and international levels.

In addition, there is another women-led local enterprise called "Fala-tanawan," which specializes in processing nutmeg into value-added products such as nutmeg syrup and dodol.



Figure 5. Fala-Tanawan Entrepreneurs

Fala Tanawan is a home-based business owned by Sulastri, a Javanese woman residing in Ternate City. Observing the local economic potential, Sulastri recognized that Ternate is rich not only in marine resources but also in spices, particularly nutmeg. She established her business ten years ago, focusing on a variety of processed food products made from locally sourced ingredients. One of her main products, nutmeg juice, generates monthly revenues of tens of millions of rupiah.

Fala Tanawan's products are marketed both through local supermarkets and online marketplaces, exemplifying a successful household micro-enterprise that leverages regional resources. The business does not only create economic opportunities for the owner but also positively impacts the surrounding community

4. Discussion

From a communication perspective, the findings indicate that coastal women's entrepreneurship is fundamentally shaped by communicative practices embedded in digital and social environments. Social media functions not merely as a marketing tool but as a communicative space where women construct identities, negotiate meanings, and build economic networks.

This study indicate that improvement of coastal women's welfare cannot be separated from gender-sensitive policy reform and institutional strengthening. Besides, women's agency recognition must be integrated into the formulation of local potential-based economic empowerment programs.

4.1 Multi-stakeholder Collaboration as an Empowerment Strategy

In the context of women's empowerment within patriarchal social structures, collaborative approaches have proven to be highly effective. This study found that cross-sectoral actors, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community leaders, play a critical role in establishing a sustainable empowerment ecosystem. The government acts as a key driver by simplifying regulations and engaging the public in the co-design of technical programs, enabling women micro-entrepreneurs to access formal services without encountering complex bureaucratic barriers.

NGOs also play a crucial role, particularly in strengthening entrepreneurial capacity through training, financial literacy programs, access to funding, and connections to external market networks. Local NGO communities serve as facilitators, linking community needs with funding opportunities and regional or international product distribution. At the same time, traditional customs provide social legitimacy that can shift public perceptions regarding women's participation in economic and public spheres. This cultural legitimacy is strategically important in creating open spaces for women to actively contribute to economic activities and engage in policy-making processes.

The interaction between third-party actors produces a synergistic effect, fostering mutual empowerment and strengthening women's networks. As depicted in the collaborative network model, these interactions facilitate the exchange of valuable resources for women's groups, including knowledge, access to information, and local political support. The effectiveness of this model can be observed through various indicators of social and economic change, which can be assessed using projective evaluation methods.

Moreover, the strength and sustainability of these networks must be supported by government policies and programs. Table 2 presents an overview of the extent of government interventions that act as bridges for

empowering coastal women, aiming to enhance welfare, and promote economic and social development within coastal communities in Ternate City.

Table 2. Ternate City Government Programs and Policy Implementation on Women's Entrepreneurship

No.	Government Programs	Benefit	Focus
1	LAKSMI Program (Action Steps for Enhancing Micro-Social Capacity and Inclusion)	Help business women to be more independent and competitive	Empower women entrepreneurs to achieve greater independence and competitiveness.
2	Helping home industries through the Women and Children Empowerment and Protection Agency	Strengthening the family economy	Distribution of household appliances such as sewing machines, packaging products
3	Village Fund	Improving and strengthening small businesses run by women	Dasawisma Group
4	Family Empowerment and Welfare (PKK)	Improving family welfare and the local economy	Woman
5	Women- friendly and caring subdistrict child	Increasing community awareness and efforts	Women and children

Cross-actor collaboration within an institutional feminist framework shows that government support through programs and access to resources plays an important role in women's economic empowerment. This transformation improves family well-being and drives structural change toward a more inclusive system. Women's involvement in markets and policy forums opens up broader participation, while multi-stakeholder collaboration strengthens women's positions in the informal sector. Effective empowerment refers to condition where women have the capacity to make strategic decisions, supported by community participation. Therefore, multi-stakeholder collaboration can be a transformative strategy to realize social justice and gender equality.

4.2 Social Media as a Marketing Communication Tool

Developing local business in the digital era requires an effective communication strategy. Social media plays a vital role in enhancing economic impact and has proven particularly effective in increasing women's income. Previous studies indicate that local food-based business, such as those producing processed fish, cloves, and nutmeg, have successfully entered national markets by leveraging social media as a marketing platform (Brahem & Boussema, 2023; Nuraisyiah et al., 2025; Suseno & Abbott,

2021). The following table presents the summary of digital platform used as marketing tools.

Table 3. Use of Digital Platforms for Product Marketing

No.	Business Name	Products	Social Media/ Marketplace
1	Package	Spiced Coffee	Shopee/IG/FB
2	Mayana Eco-Print	Products (nature innovation)	-
3	Koloncuucu Weaving	Woven fabric	-
4	Ummi Habibie	Nutmeg Syrup	Shopee/IG/FB
5	Falatanawan	Nutmeg Syrup	Shopee/IG/FB
6	Hilang	Walnut Chocolate	FB/IG
7	Lely Bintang	Tuna Fish Floss	Shopee/IG/FB
8	Modetapso	Roa/Shredded Beef Sambal	FB/IG

In the digital era, social media plays a crucial role in promoting local products. One of its main advantages is providing direct access to consumers without intermediaries. Entrepreneurs can reduce promotional costs while expanding their reach across regions and even to international markets. Digital marketing opens up opportunities to gain economic autonomy without relying on male-dominated economic structures, while challenging gender inequality in decision-making. Digital platforms also function as new institutions, allowing women to build more inclusive social and economic networks. Moreover, visualization and digital storytelling through the utilization of social media strengthens brand awareness of local products which may increase competitiveness in national and global markets (Hammad & El Naggar, 2023; Kang, 2022; Nuraisyiah et al., 2025).

Social media is not only a technological tool but also a social practice that shapes everyday interactions and meaning-making process (Couldry, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Van Dijck et al., 2018). In the context of coastal women's entrepreneurship, digital communication enables women to promote local products, negotiate gender roles, and strengthen their economic participation within community-based networks.

Table 4. The Importance of Product Marketing Through Digital Platforms

No.	Aspect	Explanation
1	Global Competition	Local products compete with factory-made goods, requiring strong visuals and digital storytelling.
2	The Need for Adaptation	Growing online consumer behavior demands digital transformation from local businesses.
3	Promotion of Regional Potential	Social media and marketplaces promote local wisdom

		—culture, materials, and nature.
4	Economic Data Collection	Digital marketing strengthens local household economies and empowers women entrepreneurs.
5	Crisis Management and Flexibility	During crises (e.g., the pandemic), social media serves as a vital marketing lifeline.

Digital communication has increasingly transformed the way entrepreneurship is practiced in contemporary society. According to Castells (2010), economic activities are increasingly embedded in networked communication systems enabled by digital technologies. Social media platforms allow individuals to construct entrepreneurial identities, build social and economic networks, and engage in market interactions beyond geographical boundaries (Hammad & El Naggar, 2023; Suseno & Abbott, 2021).

4.3 Social Impacts of the Utilization of Social Media and Marketplace

Empowerment in the Public and Digital Sectors

1. Women who previously engaged in traditional entrepreneurship are now becoming digitally independent, capable of managing business accounts, visual content, and online transactions.
2. A notable shift in social roles has occurred, from informal domestic participants to active digital economic actors operating across regional and even international markets.
3. This transformation has strengthened women's self-confidence and enhanced their rights within families and communities, supported by their visible economic contributions.

Strengthening Social and Community Business Networks

1. Online platforms, such as Facebook groups, WhatsApp Business, and joint promotion forums, have emerged among women entrepreneurs.
2. These platforms foster mutual support, information sharing, and collaborative marketing, strengthening social solidarity among business actors.
3. Local community-based business initiatives also encourage the formation of collective identities, exemplified by groups such as "Koloncucucu Weaver Community" and "MSME Pala Dodol".

Digital Literacy Transformation in Local Communities

1. Engagement with social media requires entrepreneurs to acquire skills in content creation, understanding platform algorithms, and digital communication ethics.
2. These skills often extend to family members and the wider community, creating a cycle of digital learning and capacity building.

Changes in Social Interaction Patterns

1. Customers are no longer confined to the local community; interactions now occur across regions through direct messages, comments, and live streaming features.
2. Social interactions have become more open, expansive, and multicultural, enhancing communication skills and sensitivity to the preferences of diverse markets.

Effects for Families and the Younger Generation

1. Digital business activities often involve younger family members as social media administrators, content editors, and product photographers.
2. Exposure to digital entrepreneurship increases early awareness of business opportunities within the family.
3. Families become more engaged in productive and creative economic activities, fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration.

Preservation of Local Culture and Identity

1. Local products, such as Koloncucu woven fabric, pala dodol, eco-print textiles, and spiced coffee, are packaged with renewed cultural identity through digital narratives and visual storytelling.
2. Social media has become a medium not only for buying and selling but also for preserving and promoting local cultural heritage.
3. Young people, who were previously less interested in traditional products, develop stronger emotional and cultural connections through modern digital storytelling and presentations.

4.4 Socio-political Impacts of the Utilization of Social Media and Marketplace

Table 5. Analysis of Socio-political Impacts

No.	Social Impacts	Indicators
1	Women's independence increases	Many housewives now manage their own business accounts.
2	Digital literacy grows	Entrepreneurs develop skills in online content creation and promotion.
3	Supporting community empowerment	Promotion efforts are increasingly shared equally among MSMEs.
4	Changing local economic structures	Many families rely on online businesses as a primary source of income.
5	Strengthened local identity	Specialty products, such as spiced coffee and woven fabrics, are being revived through digital marketing.

From a communication perspective, women's use of social media and online marketplaces creates new spaces for visibility, information exchange, relationship building, and participation in community discussions. These practices can influence how women communicate their interests, negotiate recognition, and connect business activities with local development conversations (Iwu et al., 2023; Suseno & Abbott, 2021).

1. Using social media and marketplaces goes beyond business strategy, serving as a form of resistance to structural inequalities in market access, capital, and technology. Digital platforms can reduce some entry barriers while not eliminating gender disparities in technological engagement (Iwu et al., 2023; Kang, 2022).
2. Women's active digital marketing strengthens informal political participation, influencing economic and social decision-making within families and communities.
3. Women emerge as strategic actors in local development initiatives.
4. Informal power is redistributed in villages and cities, with women becoming not only beneficiaries but drivers of the digital economy.
5. Women exert political influence to shape policies that support MSMEs.

The use of social media and online marketplaces by women to market local products extends beyond economic exchange; it constitutes a communicative arena in which women negotiate meanings, identities, relationships, and the visibility of local culture. This highlights the importance of

communication practices in understanding how digital transformation changes local business interaction and community participation.

The qualitative findings indicate that communication access and institutional support shape the opportunities available to women entrepreneurs. Training, information access, and communication channels can facilitate business promotion, market interaction, and participation in decision-making, while unequal access to these resources may constrain entrepreneurial communication (Brush et al., 2009; Kabeer, 1999; Nuraisyiah et al., 2025).

However, the study also highlights new complexities, notably what can be termed the social network paradox. Traditional local community networks provide women with crucial social capital, offering moral support, access to information, and a sense of security. At the same time, these networks often reproduce patriarchal power structures. As Rahman (2019) notes, men frequently control traditional networks, exerting influence over access to resources and collective decision-making. Consequently, women face a dilemma: while leveraging social networks for business advancement, they must navigate cultural constraints that limit their autonomy.

Another complexity arises from the misalignment between empowerment programs designed by external actors, particularly government agencies or donors, and the values of local wisdom that have historically guided the management of power resources. Wulandari & Mahardika (2020) highlight that many empowerment initiatives fail to achieve their full impact because they overlook the systemic knowledge transmitted across generations. Consequently, such programs are often perceived as irrelevant interventions or even as disruptions to long-established social orders.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes significantly to the institutionalist feminist framework by showing that women's agency is not merely reactive to oppressive structures but actively transforms them from within. The study identified multiple cases where women created relatively autonomous spaces, free from dominant practices, such as through women's cooperatives or collectively managed group businesses. These initiatives allow women to establish their own rules, share knowledge, and distribute benefits more equitably, illustrating practical

applications of institutional feminist principles in local economic contexts (Brush et al., 2009; Kabeer, 1999).

Furthermore, women demonstrated the ability to leverage their cultural capital, such as inherited knowledge and traditional skills, to negotiate local policies and gain recognition for their productive contributions. This cultural capital has become a vital tool for both economic and social development, recognized by the public and local governments alike. Thus, the empowerment process involves not only access to modern resources but also the strategic use of traditional resources that have often been marginalized within formal development frameworks.

Overall, these findings confirm that societal transformation in favor of women requires an approach that goes beyond purely economic logic or state regulations. Effective empowerment must also account for the complexity of social relations, cultural values, and local knowledge within communities. An integrated perspective grounded in institutionalist feminism provides a framework for understanding how women innovate and resist structural constraints, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable social and economic environment. Based on qualitative thematic analysis, several key findings emerged:

1. Coastal women have increasingly adopted digital strategies to market local products since the COVID-19 pandemic, with most using social media independently despite limited formal training. This pattern is consistent with recent research showing that digital platforms can create opportunities for women entrepreneurs while offline conditions and capability gaps continue to shape participation (Kang, 2022; Nuraisyiah et al., 2025; Suseno & Abbott, 2021).
2. The Ternate City Government has implemented programs supporting local women entrepreneurs, including provision of production equipment, production spaces, training, and market access. However, women are not involved in program planning and often participate only as recipients rather than active initiators.
3. Major constraints include limited access to digital training and unstable internet connectivity. Recent evidence from Indonesia likewise emphasizes persistent gendered gaps in digital capabilities and the importance of targeted digital training for women entrepreneurs (Nuraisyiah et al., 2025).

4. Women actively engaged in local communities exhibit greater social resilience and foster collective marketing collaborations.

Based on women's empowerment theory, a component of feminist institutionalist analysis, social and political frameworks play a crucial role in shaping women's entrepreneurial activities according to local potential. Socio-political constructs influence the patterns and trajectories of women's business development within the context of the local economy. To systematically analyze women's empowerment, Longwe (1995) proposes five key dimensions. Kabeer (1999) complements this framework by conceptualizing empowerment through resources, agency, and achievements, which helps interpret how access to resources is translated into decision-making capacity and well-being.

1. Welfare: This dimension refers to improvements in women's material conditions, including food, income, health, and housing. In this study, the welfare stage emphasizes efforts to increase family income. The entrepreneurial activities of five women who participated in various business assistance programs provided by the Ternate City Government have contributed to family economic growth. These women expressed gratitude to the government for supporting the development of women's entrepreneurship, which has positively impacted the quality of life for both the women and their families.
2. Access: Access refers to women's ability to obtain resources such as education, healthcare, credit, and training. Women entrepreneurs in Ternate City, including *Ibu* Umi, *Ibu* Nurjana, *Ibu* Lastri, *Ibu* Sehat, and Ummi Habibie, have participated in entrepreneurship development training for 5–7 years and have received mentorship from the Ministry of Industry. Such access strengthens their businesses and plays a critical role in fostering sustainable entrepreneurship development.
3. Participation: This dimension emphasizes women's involvement in decision-making processes. At this stage, women should actively contribute to program planning, allowing them greater opportunity for equitable growth during program implementation. Research indicates that women who have long developed businesses based on local potential are often only involved during program execution, rather than in the planning or development phases. To address this, women should

establish entrepreneurial groups that collectively advocate for their rights and ensure fair representation within programs.

4. Critical Awareness: Critical awareness refers to women's understanding of their political and social position within the broader social structure. Women are increasingly beginning to voice concerns about policies and programs that are unfair or that exclude them from decision-making. However, limited education often makes women entrepreneurs hesitant to critique government policies, leading many to start businesses independently without seeking formal support. Additionally, patriarchal social structures can inhibit the development of gender-equitable enterprises when women lack the critical awareness to organize collectively and advocate for fair regulations.
5. Control represents the highest level of women's empowerment, where women or women's communities are able to oversee and influence government-created programs (Longwe, 1995). At this stage, women have formed entrepreneurial communities and actively participate in the development of businesses based on local potential. They possess critical awareness of social and policy-related injustices, making their involvement in decision-making essential. However, patriarchal cultural norms in Ternate, historically a sultanate society, continue to pose challenges. Current interventions, such as mentoring and part-time training, are limited in scope and frequency. Women predominantly manage businesses in the food sector, reinforcing their traditional role as community food providers, but this has yet to cultivate broader leadership awareness necessary for strategic decision-making in local entrepreneurship. Therefore, establishing strong leadership within women's entrepreneurial groups is crucial to ensure programs are fair, sustainable, and have long-term impacts on women and their families (Chambon et al., 2024; Kabeer, 1999).

In the context of coastal women, many local entrepreneurs in Ternate City are engaged in seafood-based businesses. The role of coastal women in Ternate differs from other regions, where women not only participate in fish processing but also engage directly in fishing activities to support their families' economic needs (Harper et al., 2020; Misrina et al., 2022). Studies from several Asian countries, including Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, indicate that coastal women's involvement in seafood processing

contributes positively not only to household welfare but also to national income. Ternate has significant potential to advance if women are politically empowered as active participants in policies and programs aimed at developing the coastal community economy (Chambon et al., 2024; Kleiber et al., 2015).

From an institutional feminist perspective, coastal women entrepreneurs in this region are not only adapting to the digital economy but also transforming social and institutional structures that previously constrained their agency. Through social media and digital marketplaces, women have created inclusive economic spaces, challenged patriarchal norms, and strengthened their position as empowered actors. The following matrix illustrates how institutional feminist theory explains the relationship between agency and structure (Iwu et al., 2023; Kang, 2022; Suseno & Abbott, 2021).

Table 6. The Relationship between Agency and Structure in the Study of Coastal Women Entrepreneurs

No.	Aspects	Field Findings	Institutional Feminist Interpretations
1	Government Policy	Empowerment programs do not involve women in planning	Institutional structures remain predominantly patriarchal and top-down.
2	Digital Marketing	Limited formal training in digital skill	Women act as agents of change within digital economic systems
3	Socio-Cultural Barriers	Local norms restrict women's presence in public spaces	While social institutions continue to reflect patriarchal norms, they are increasingly being negotiated through digital innovation.
4	Socio-Economic Impact	Women acquire independent sources of income and expand their professional and social networks	Efforts to transform institutions toward gender equality in the local economy are actively emerging.

In this study, data visualization functions to clarify the analysis process, the relationships between themes, and the causal flow of the research findings. Visual presentations in the form of tables and conceptual diagrams, which served as tools for interpreting qualitative data.

Table 7. Research Data Codification Process

No.	Initial Code	Category	Theme
1	Limited access to capital	Structural barriers	Institutional inequality
2	Lack of policy support	Structural barriers	Institutional inequality
3	Strong family networks	Social network	Social network paradox
4	Local community support	Social network	Social network paradox

5	Independent digital marketing	Adaptive strategy	Woman agency
6	Local-based product innovation	Adaptive strategy	Woman agency

The research data coding process was started with initial codes from interviews and observations, grouping them into categories through axial coding, and narrowing them down to key themes through selective coding. This process confirms that research themes emerge through systematic analysis of empirical data.

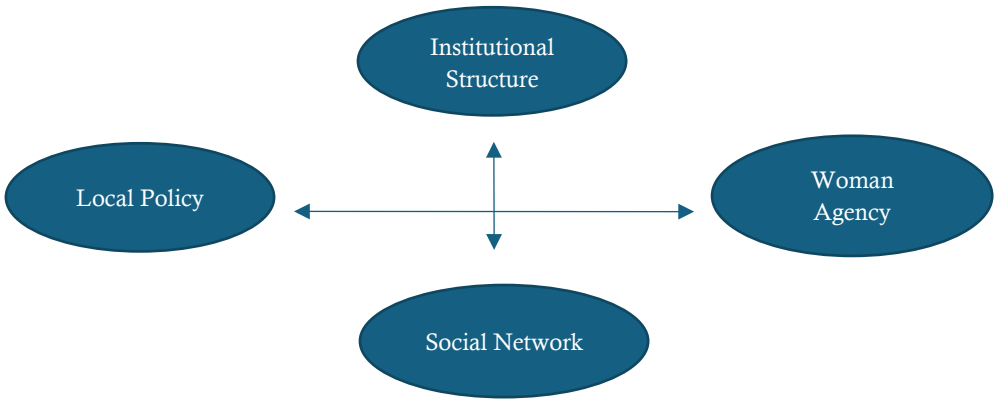

Figure 6. Diagram of Relationships Between Themes

Based on the figure above, women's agency is at the center of the analysis as it is formed through dynamic interactions with institutional structures, local policies, and social networks. This relationship is two-way, where women are influenced structures and also play roles in negotiation and utilization of available opportunities.

Table 8. Comparison of Research Findings by Category

Category	Key finding	Support	Barriers	Implications for Women's Entrepreneurship
Structural barriers	Coastal women have limited access to capital and lower institutional support.	Small-scale MSME assistance program	Complicated administrative procedures, limited access to credit	Limiting business scale and sustainability
Social network	Families and communities play a role in supporting business activities.	Family labor assistance and moral support	Dual role burdens and social pressures	Creating a paradox between support and restrictions
Adaptive strategy	Women develop independent strategies based on local potential.	Product innovation and simple marketing	Limited technology and training	Strengthening micro-scale business the resilience
Local policy	Policies are not yet fully gender-	Women's empowerment	Uneven and unsustainable	Women's agency has not been integrated

Woman agency	responsive. Women can make economic decisions independently	program Negotiation and innovation skills	implementation Patriarchal social structure	into policies A key factor in entrepreneurial sustainability

The table above shows comparisons of research findings based on analytical categories from the data codification process. Each category has an interconnected role in shaping coastal women's entrepreneurial practices. Structural barriers and local policies tend to limit women's mobility, while social networks and adaptive strategies act as both support mechanisms and barriers. Women agency emerges as a result of the complex interaction of structures, policies, and social practices at the local level.

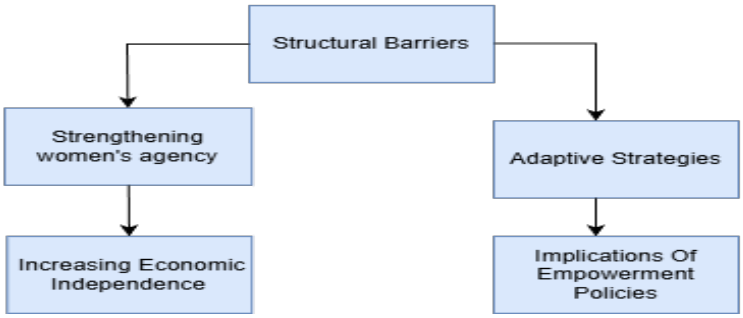

Figure 7. Causal relationship between structural barriers and the adaptive responses

The figure illustrates the causal relationship between structural barriers and the adaptive responses. The adaptive strategies serve as important mechanisms for strengthening agency and promoting economic independence, which in turn has direct implications for the formulation of local potential-based empowerment policies for women.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of analysis, it can be concluded that coastal women significantly contribute to local economy through resource-based entrepreneurial practices. This involvement remains overshadowed by structural barriers such as limited access to capital, weak institutional support, and not fully gender-responsive policies. Digitalization, the strengthening of women's organizations, and collective entrepreneurship models indicate the opportunities to transform women’s economics independence.

Most studies have provided important insights into the role of women in the coastal economic sector but they only focus on descriptive aspects. The relationship between women's agency, institutional dynamics, social networks, and adaptive strategies in exploiting local potential have been comprehensively investigated. Therefore, future studies need to examine how women negotiate structural limitations while creating economic opportunities in complex social contexts. This present study places women agency at the center of analysis in local resource-based entrepreneurial practices.

Although previous studies have examined women's entrepreneurship, limited attention has been given to how communication practices mediate the interaction between women's agency and institutional constraints. Therefore, this study fills the gap by positioning coastal women's entrepreneurship within a communication framework.

Declarations

Author Contributions

Misrina was responsible for conceptualization, research design, methodology, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the original manuscript. Mukhtar Yusuf contribute to the literature review, data validation, interpretation of research findings, critical review, and editing of the manuscript. Both author contributed to development of the manuscript, read and approved the final version, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the research.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI Statement

There is the use of AI (Chat GPT) in literature review

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study were collected through qualitative interviews and observations involving local micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) actors. Due to confidentiality and privacy considerations, the interview transcripts and identifiable participant information are not publicly available. Relevant data maybe obtained from corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to participants' consent and applicable confidentiality requirements.

Ethical Approval.

This study was approved by Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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