
The Transformation of Marketing Communication through Social Media among Local MSMEs of the Baduy Luar Indigenous Community

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Abstract

The digital era has transformed the dynamics of communication, economics, and cultural representation in various societies, including among Indonesia's indigenous communities. The Baduy Luar community, known for its strong adherence to traditional customs, is undergoing a gradual transformation through the use of digital platforms. This study explores how social media functions as a medium for marketing communication and cultural expression among local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within the Baduy Luar community. Using cultural communication and digital marketing perspectives, the study highlights how social media enables indigenous entrepreneurs to balance cultural authenticity with market visibility. Empirical observations indicate that social media has become an easily accessible and low-cost marketing tool that allows Baduy artisans to expand their markets while preserving traditional values. The integration of local identity, narrative authenticity, and digital marketing strategies forms a new model of indigenous marketing communication. The research findings indicate that the Baduy Luar community utilizes social media not as a symbol of modernization, but as a means of cultural expression and economic resilience. Digital media is utilized to expand market access while upholding ethical principles derived from ancestral traditions. This transformation presents a digital communication model rooted in local wisdom and aligned with ecological and moral responsibility. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of value-oriented development communication studies. Practically, the results provide insights for policymakers and digital marketers in designing inclusive and culturally rooted communication strategies. The case of the Baduy Luar demonstrates that technological advancement, when guided by ancestral philosophies, can actually strengthen local identity.

Keywords: *Social Media, Indigenous Marketing, Digital Communication, Baduy Community, Local MSMEs*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has fundamentally altered the landscape of communication and economic activity worldwide. These changes extend beyond urban industries to reach traditional communities that were once isolated from the forces of modernization. Indigenous groups increasingly adapt to digital platforms, particularly social media, as a means of accessing information, expanding social networks, and pursuing new economic opportunities (Carlson, 2020; Welch, 2023).

The emergence of social media represents a shift from linear communication to interactive and participatory models. Every individual now holds the potential to become both a producer and distributor of marketing messages within a global digital ecosystem. This transformation enables indigenous communities to showcase their cultural identity to broader audiences while simultaneously marketing locally produced goods rooted in traditional values (Smailhodzic, 2025; Frazer, 2022). The Baduy Luar community in Indonesia offers a compelling example of this phenomenon. Despite maintaining deep cultural traditions, segments of the Baduy Luar population have begun to engage with digital technologies to support creative economic activities and promote local products such as honey, woven fabrics, and handicrafts (Lestari & Wibowo, 2023).

Digital marketing practices among the Baduy Luar demonstrate a form of cultural adaptation to global technological change. Locally crafted goods once limited to traditional markets are now shared through Instagram, Facebook, and other platforms managed by local youth or supporting organizations. This convergence between heritage and innovation reflects

how local wisdom and modern communication can coexist within a shared value framework (Wahyuni, 2022; Widiyanti, 2021). The process exemplifies glocalization the integration of global digital forms with locally defined meanings and aesthetics (Robertson, 1995).

Social media serves as both a communication tool and a cultural arena. Within marketing contexts, it not only promotes products but also allows indigenous entrepreneurs to construct narratives of authenticity and sustainability. Digital participation among indigenous groups, as Carlson (2021) argues, is not merely technological adaptation but also a political act of asserting identity in virtual spaces. Welch (2023) reinforces this by demonstrating that culturally grounded marketing enhances product value perception and strengthens consumer loyalty through authenticity-driven brand storytelling.

Social media marketing provides practical benefits for small-scale indigenous enterprises. It offers efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and flexible communication structures that can transcend geographical limitations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). For the Baduy Luar MSMEs, these characteristics open market access that was previously constrained by physical and social boundaries. The relationship-based marketing approach, in which consumers engage emotionally with brands reflecting local authenticity and ecological sustainability, becomes a strategic advantage (Hudson et al., 2016).

Digital engagement among indigenous communities also supports cultural resilience. Studies have shown that social media can function as a medium for cultural documentation and revitalization (Intahchomphoo et al., 2018). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube allow younger generations to engage in visual storytelling, preserving traditional crafts and oral narratives in creative digital formats (deMaría, 2024). In the case of the Baduy Luar, online promotion of local products simultaneously reinforces collective cultural pride and economic independence.

Despite these opportunities, indigenous communities often face challenges in digital adaptation. Limited infrastructure, digital literacy, and unequal access to technology hinder full participation in digital economies (Prasetyo & Nugroho, 2022). Such disparities risk deepening the digital divide between indigenous populations and mainstream economic actors (Intahchomphoo et al., 2018). Strengthening digital literacy and inclusive education becomes essential to ensure that social media transformation leads to both cultural and economic empowerment.

The marketing transformation within the Baduy Luar community demonstrates that digital communication is not solely transactional. It represents a socio-cultural process where authenticity and identity are interwoven with economic practice. Cultural narratives embedded in social media promotion create symbolic value that enhances consumer engagement and brand credibility (Abidin & Brown, 2023). This aligns with the concept of indigenous marketing, which emphasizes embedding local cultural values within marketing communication strategies (Welch, 2023).

Research on the transformation of marketing communication through social media among indigenous MSMEs provides valuable insights for both theory and practice. It contributes to the discourse on digital inclusion, cultural sustainability, and community-based entrepreneurship in the context of the digital economy. The case of the Baduy Luar highlights how indigenous values, when aligned with digital innovation, can redefine the intersection between tradition and technology, ensuring cultural continuity in the age of digital transformation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the transformation of marketing communication through social media among local MSMEs in the Baduy Luar Indigenous Community. This approach was

chosen because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of cultural values, communication behavior, and adaptation to digital platforms, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design enables the researcher to analyze the phenomenon contextually and holistically, emphasizing meaning rather than measurement.

The research was conducted in Kanekes Village, Leuwidamar District, Lebak Regency, Banten Province, which is home to the Baduy Luar Indigenous community. The study participants consisted of local MSME actors, community facilitators, and consumers or social media followers who interact with Baduy products online. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their active involvement in digital promotional activities and their understanding of local cultural values. The number of informants was determined using the data saturation principle, meaning data collection was concluded when no new or relevant information emerged.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and digital documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore strategies, perceptions, and experiences of MSME actors in utilizing social media as a marketing tool. Observations were carried out both in the field at production sites and in digital spaces such as Instagram, WhatsApp Business and TikTok. Documentation included promotional content, consumer testimonials, and other relevant online materials. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing through an inductive process.

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through member checking with informants, while transferability was ensured by providing rich contextual descriptions of the research setting. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of research procedures, and confirmability was supported by the researcher's reflexivity to minimize personal bias. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including obtaining permission from local Baduy representatives, securing informed consent from participants, and respecting indigenous norms and cultural values throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Marketing Communication

The transformation of marketing communication among Baduy Luar Indigenous MSMEs reflects a significant shift from a traditional economic system to a selective adaptation of the digital era. The change emerged gradually through ongoing cultural negotiation under the guidance of customary law. Community participation in digital economic activities has grown as part of an effort to sustain family livelihoods while maintaining ancestral values. Digital transformation is not perceived as modernization in a Western sense but as an adaptive strategy ensuring community resilience amid global capitalism.

At the heart of this transformation lies *Pikukuh Karuhun*, the supreme customary philosophy of the Baduy people. It mandates balance between humans, nature, and the Creator, serving as a moral compass for every economic activity. Honesty, simplicity, and ecological responsibility form the ethical foundation for both production and marketing. These principles restrict exploitative behavior and ensure that innovation aligns with spiritual and moral values. Within marketing communication, *Pikukuh Karuhun* acts as an ethical framework that safeguards cultural dignity and authenticity.

Before digital technologies entered their lives, marketing was conducted through direct interactions at traditional markets. Seller-buyer relationships were personal, built on trust and reciprocity. The arrival of social media expanded these relationships while preserving their moral

essence. Platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp became new spaces for product promotion without eroding the respectful, honest, and transparent communication style that defines the Baduy ethos.

The current situation reflects a hybrid economy, merging traditional craftsmanship with digital outreach. Textile weaving, honey production, and bamboo crafts remain manually produced, yet promotional activities now reach audiences beyond local boundaries. This hybridization generates a form of marketing communication that integrates local wisdom with global technology. Entrepreneurs use digital media not to imitate modernity but to affirm indigenous identity. The balance between economic advancement and cultural preservation embodies the living spirit of *Pikukuh Karuhun*.

Customary philosophy functions as a moral safeguard determining how far technology may be integrated. Digital tools remain prohibited within the Baduy Dalam territory and are used with strict boundaries in Baduy Luar. This structure prevents digitalization from eroding spiritual integrity. Adaptation proceeds selectively, guided by the community's collective wisdom to meet economic needs without undermining cultural wholeness. *Pikukuh Karuhun* provides the ethical foundation that progress holds meaning only when harmony among humans, nature, and the divine is preserved.

The transformation of marketing communication among Baduy Luar Indigenous entrepreneurs demonstrates that modernization and tradition can coexist. The process reveals a model of value-oriented development emphasizing cultural continuity over economic acceleration. The Baduy experience stands as an inspiring reference for other indigenous communities navigating digital transformation while remaining faithful to their ancestral philosophy..

The Role of Social Media in Strengthening Digital Marketing Communications

Social media plays a central role in strengthening digital marketing communication among Baduy Luar Indigenous MSMEs. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have become primary spaces for introducing products, building brand identity, and maintaining consumer relationships. Within this context, social media functions not merely as a marketing channel but as a site of cultural interaction and representation. Each visual narrative depicting weaving, bamboo crafts, or honey harvesting serves as a symbolic story that conveys the authenticity and values of the community.

The distinctive appeal of Baduy Luar's digital marketing lies in the synthesis of cultural authenticity with digital aesthetics. Entrepreneurs do not simply imitate mainstream marketing strategies; they reinterpret them through local values of simplicity, honesty, and harmony. This approach results in an ethical and organic communication model, distant from the manipulative techniques common in commercial advertising. The digital image of Baduy products is constructed through meaning and storytelling rather than slogans or discounts. The effectiveness of social media emerges not from the technology itself but from the articulation of cultural meaning within a relatable digital format.

The communication strategy demonstrates that social media functions as both an instrument of economic empowerment and a tool of cultural diplomacy. Consumer engagement through comments, shares, and expressions of support creates social networks that expand market reach. Entrepreneurs gain economic benefits through increased demand, while the community gains recognition of its cultural presence in the digital public sphere. These interactions strengthen community confidence to participate in economic activities while preserving traditional identity.

The influence of social media remains guided by ethical and customary frameworks. Indigenous regulations define the boundaries of acceptable content. Entrepreneurs are prohibited from displaying sacred rituals or spiritual ceremonies, preserving the sanctity of cultural life from commodification. This adherence to customary law maintains social and spiritual

equilibrium. Digitalization in Baduy Luar thus evolves within a system of strong moral control where indigenous norms act as filters that ensure cultural integrity.

The introduction of social media has reshaped how the community perceives the relationship between culture and economy. Marketing is now understood as communication of values rather than a mere act of selling. Products such as woven cloths, forest honey, and bamboo crafts are perceived as symbols of inherited wisdom rather than material commodities. Social media bridges local heritage with global audiences, transforming traditional knowledge into a visible and respected cultural asset. The experience of the Baduy Luar demonstrates that indigenous societies can harness digital spaces to expand cultural influence while reinforcing their economic sustainability in a competitive environment.

Local Wisdom-Based Communication Strategy

The marketing communication strategy of the Baduy Luar Indigenous community is deeply rooted in local wisdom that has guided collective life for centuries. Core values of honesty, simplicity, and harmony with nature shape social interactions and serve as the ethical foundation for all economic activities. Within digital marketing, these values are translated into communication practices that reject exaggeration and manipulation. Messages shared through social media emphasize authenticity in production processes and the symbolic meaning behind each product.

Promotional efforts undertaken by Baduy Luar entrepreneurs are grounded in cultural preservation rather than cultural exploitation. Woven textiles, forest honey, and bamboo crafts are presented as representations of ecological wisdom and sustainable living. This approach demonstrates that marketing communication can function as a form of cultural education. Audiences exposed to Baduy Luar's digital content do not merely act as consumers but as learners engaging with indigenous perspectives on nature, labor, and spirituality.

The distinction between customary-based communication and modern marketing lies in message construction. Conventional advertising often relies on persuasive tactics, whereas indigenous communication emphasizes sincerity and transparency. The principle of *ngamumule budaya* (preserving tradition) guides all promotional activities, ensuring harmony between economic gain and cultural dignity. Every digital message strives to balance material benefits with moral and social values. This approach forms a unique type of cultural branding that enhances product value while maintaining authenticity.

Compliance with customary norms establishes ethical boundaries in digital communication. Every piece of promotional content must be approved by traditional leaders to prevent violations of sacred cultural codes. This approval system regulates visual representation to avoid commodifying spiritual symbols. Such mechanisms illustrate how indigenous communities engage with technology while preserving cultural autonomy. Digital adaptation thus unfolds within a framework of social regulation that safeguards equilibrium between innovation and tradition.

The effectiveness of local wisdom-based strategies is reflected in growing public trust and positive perception of Baduy Luar products. Consumers perceive the goods not as mere commodities but as manifestations of moral and ecological integrity. This cultural uniqueness strengthens competitiveness in the increasingly standardized digital marketplace. Local wisdom serves as a strategic differentiator that cannot be replicated, emerging from deeply embedded values that sustain the community's way of life.

The Socio-Economic Impact of Digital Transformation on the Baduy Luar Indigenous Community

Digital transformation has profoundly altered the social and economic dynamics of the Baduy Luar Indigenous community. Engagement with digital media and online communication has opened new opportunities for local economic growth while preserving cultural identity.

Entrepreneurs who once relied solely on traditional market sales now access national and international markets through online platforms. Products such as woven textiles, forest honey, and bamboo crafts gain wider exposure and higher market value. This progress fosters an entrepreneurial spirit among younger generations, yet remains closely monitored under customary law.

The increase in income from digital marketing activities has improved household welfare. Access to education and healthcare has expanded, while dependence on external intermediaries has decreased. Economic digitalization has strengthened the community's bargaining position within the creative and cultural production chain. The shift marks a transition from marginality to active participation in broader market systems. Nevertheless, all economic progress remains regulated by *Pikukuh Karuhun*, emphasizing balance over material accumulation.

Social transformation accompanies this economic evolution. Social media serves as a medium for youth to express cultural identity and connect with audiences beyond their territory. The interaction promotes a renewed awareness of cultural preservation as a global dialogue rather than isolation. Cultural resilience is achieved not through rejection of modernity but through reinterpretation of tradition in digital form. Communication technologies become instruments for transmitting ancestral values rather than replacing them.

The introduction of digital tools also challenges social cohesion and cultural control. Customary values demand equilibrium between openness and restraint. Elders express concern that excessive social media use may dilute the ethics of traditional communication. Monitoring digital content has become an essential form of social regulation to prevent cultural commodification. The moral principle *ulah matak rusak kana diri, ulah matak ngaruksak kana batur, ulah matak ngaruksak kana alam* ("do not harm yourself, others, or nature") continues to serve as a moral compass guiding human–technology interaction.

Current conditions reflect a delicate balance between economic benefits and social responsibility. Digitalization extends market reach while deepening collective awareness of cultural sustainability. Baduy Luar products now function as cultural ambassadors, conveying messages of simplicity, harmony, and integrity to a global audience. The digital transformation of the Baduy Luar community demonstrates that technological progress can coexist with local wisdom when grounded in the ancestral philosophy that honors life in all its dimensions.

Discussion

The transformation of marketing communication among the Baduy Luar community reflects a profound intersection between traditional wisdom and the digital economy. The integration of social media as a marketing tool marks a structural shift in how indigenous economic actors engage with broader markets. Castells (2009) describes this as part of the emergence of a network society, where power, identity, and participation are mediated by technology. Within this framework, the Baduy Luar community demonstrates how connectivity can coexist with customary autonomy, rooted in *pikukuh karuhun* the philosophical principle that sustains ethical harmony and simplicity in all social relations.

Before digital adoption, communication between producers and consumers relied on direct interaction through traditional markets and word-of-mouth channels. These systems preserved trust and social cohesion but constrained market reach. The entry of social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp expanded market visibility and reduced geographical limitations. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), digital marketing enables two-way communication that builds brand engagement. The Baduy Luar's adoption of social media thus represents a reconfiguration of marketing from interpersonal exchange to network-based interaction while maintaining an emphasis on authenticity and locality.

This transformation also illustrates glocalization a process Robertson (1995) defines as the coexistence of global standardization and local differentiation. Local identity and traditional

ethics remain central to the branding of Baduy Luar products, while digital tools enhance accessibility to urban and international consumers. Servaes (2019) emphasizes that communication for sustainable development must be value-based, integrating cultural identity into innovation. The Baduy's use of digital media exemplifies this principle: it converts cultural values into economic narratives without eroding the moral compass defined by *pikukuh karuhun*.

The diffusion of digital innovation in the Baduy Luar community aligns with Rogers' (2003) model, where adoption is shaped by perceived compatibility, social norms, and communication channels. The presence of youth groups who mediate between traditional producers and digital markets demonstrates the role of opinion leaders in facilitating adoption. These mediators reinterpret traditional craftsmanship into marketable digital content while ensuring adherence to customary ethics. Such negotiation echoes Servaes' (2008) view that communication for change must be dialogic and participatory rather than imposed.

The digital transition, however, remains selective and culturally negotiated. Escobar (2018) argues that development should not be viewed as linear modernization but as a pluriversal process that respects multiple epistemologies. The Baduy Luar case reflects this logic: social media use does not represent cultural abandonment but an adaptive strategy guided by ancestral wisdom. *Pikukuh karuhun* functions as a regulatory framework that filters technological adoption through moral evaluation. This cultural logic ensures that digital participation strengthens, rather than weakens, the social fabric.

From a resilience perspective, Adger (2000) asserts that social systems can sustain change by preserving adaptive capacities rooted in cultural coherence. The Baduy Luar community exhibits such resilience by integrating digital communication into economic practices without dismantling indigenous institutions. This confirms that digital transformation, when guided by local philosophy, can enhance socio-economic empowerment while maintaining ethical equilibrium.

Ultimately, the case of the Baduy Luar community enriches theoretical discourse on communication and cultural adaptation in the digital era. It demonstrates how indigenous marketing systems can evolve within a network society without succumbing to homogenization. The coexistence of *pikukuh karuhun* and social media-based marketing redefines the boundaries of modernization, showing that technological adoption can occur through cultural continuity rather than rupture. This form of transformation embodies Servaes' (2019) notion of value-based communication a process that upholds human dignity, cultural identity, and sustainable development in the midst of digital globalization..

CONCLUSION

The transformation of marketing communications through social media among the Baduy Luar indigenous community demonstrates that modernization and tradition can coexist harmoniously. Guided by *Pikukuh Karuhun*, a philosophical foundation emphasizing simplicity, honesty, and harmony with nature, the Baduy Luar people have selectively embraced digital technology as a means to sustain their livelihoods while preserving cultural authenticity.

Social media has become more than just a marketing tool; it serves as a medium for cultural expression, identity affirmation, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business, indigenous entrepreneurs can share their expertise, values, and ecological ethics with a wider audience. This digital engagement does not signal cultural erosion, but rather the creative adaptation of ancestral wisdom into new forms of communication.

These findings reveal that the integration of digital marketing within the Baduy Luar community operates within ethical and spiritual boundaries that prevent cultural commodification. Every form of online promotion remains aligned with customary law, ensuring that the sacred dimensions of their culture are respected. This balance between innovation and

moral restraint forms a unique, values-based communication model that prioritizes authenticity, sustainability, and ethical entrepreneurship. Economically, digital transformation has expanded market access and improved household well-being, while socially, it has fostered cultural pride and resilience. This community approach demonstrates that indigenous peoples' digital engagement, when guided by local wisdom, can strengthen economic independence and cultural identity.

The Baduy Luar community's experience contributes to theoretical discussions on indigenous modernization, sustainable communication, and cultural resilience in the digital age. This experience offers an alternative paradigm to the conventional modernization narrative in which technological advances serve humanity and heritage, rather than undermine them. Ultimately, this case reaffirms that technology, when grounded in moral and ecological responsibility, can be an instrument for inclusive, ethical, and culturally rooted development.

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