

## Empowering Local Economy through Enhanced Production and Marketing of Lokan Crackers in Gampong Lamseunia

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### Kata Kunci

Kerupuk lokan  
Peningkatan produksi  
Strategi pemasaran  
Pengemasan

### Keywords:

Lokan crackers  
Production enhancement  
Marketing strategies

Received: October 2024

Accepted: November 2024

Published: February 2025

### Abstrak

Program pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan produksi dan pemasaran kerupuk lokan di Gampong Lamseunia melalui serangkaian kegiatan yang dirancang secara sistematis. Analisis SWOT awal menunjukkan potensi besar dalam produksi kerupuk lokan, meskipun terdapat tantangan seperti konsistensi produksi dan ketiadaan peralatan yang memadai. Pelatihan yang dilakukan berhasil meningkatkan keterampilan anggota kelompok dalam standarisasi proses produksi, mulai dari pemilihan bahan baku hingga pengemasan, serta menekankan pentingnya branding. Meskipun beberapa keberhasilan telah dicapai, keseragaman potongan kerupuk masih menjadi kendala, sehingga dibutuhkan inovasi peralatan produksi di masa mendatang. Pelatihan pengemasan dan branding memberikan pemahaman lebih mengenai nilai jual produk, dan variasi kemasan kini mulai diterapkan untuk menarik minat konsumen. Meskipun peningkatan penjualan belum signifikan, upaya pemasaran melalui kios lokal dan media sosial telah memperluas jangkauan pasar dan meningkatkan kesadaran konsumen terhadap produk kerupuk lokan. Partisipasi aktif dan antusiasme anggota kelompok menunjukkan kesiapan mereka untuk mengembangkan usaha secara berkelanjutan. Ke depannya, fokus akan diarahkan pada optimalisasi strategi pemasaran digital dan inovasi teknologi produksi untuk mengatasi tantangan yang ada. Program ini telah meletakkan fondasi yang kuat bagi pertumbuhan ekonomi lokal dan diharapkan dapat meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat Gampong Lamseunia.

### Abstract

This community service program aimed to enhance the production and marketing of Lokan crackers in Gampong Lamseunia through a series of systematically designed activities. Initial SWOT analysis revealed that the production had great potential, though challenges like production consistency and lack of appropriate equipment persisted. Training sessions improved group members' skills in standardizing production processes, from material selection to packaging, and emphasized the importance of branding. Despite some success, achieving uniform cracker cuts remained a challenge, highlighting the need for future innovation in production tools. Packaging and branding training led to an increased understanding of the product's market value, and varied packaging options have since been adopted to attract consumers. Although significant sales growth has yet to be realized, marketing efforts through local kiosks and social media have expanded market reach and consumer awareness. The active participation and enthusiasm of the group members indicate a readiness to develop their business sustainably. Moving forward, the focus will be on optimizing digital marketing strategies and introducing production technologies to address current challenges. This program has laid a strong foundation for economic growth, empowering the local community to fully utilize the potential of Lokan crackers. It is expected that these initiatives will drive sustainable local economic development and improve the welfare of the Gampong Lamseunia community.



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## INTRODUCTION

Gampong Lamseunia, located in Leupung Subdistrict, has appeal natural potential that has not yet been optimally utilized. This village lies along a busy land transport route connecting districts and serves as a potential tourist destination due to the Sarah Bathing Site, which is frequently visited by residents from nearby cities, especially on weekends and during holidays. However, official data on the number of tourists visiting the site is unavailable since it has not been fully developed as a tourist destination. Facilities at the site are still incomplete, and access to the location is not entirely adequate (AcehInfo, 2022). Nevertheless, tourist enthusiasm remains high, with approximately 300 to 500 visitors visiting the location on weekends. The geographical advantage of Gampong Lamseunia, with its proximity to both the coast and surrounding forests, offers scenic natural views that could be managed as tourist destination to support the local economy (AcehTrend, 2019). The current economic activities of Gampong Lamseunia residents are primarily centered around farming and gardening due to the village's proximity to forest areas. The majority of the residents work in the fields, therefore they rarely use other resources like the Sarah River, which is rich in lokan, a kind of mollusk. The lokan found in the Sarah River is very numerous, ranging from 15 to 25 cm on average (Figure 1). Additionally, the meat of the lokan is very chewy, making it difficult to process. This has led to a reluctance among the community to consume or utilize it. According to local community leaders, this type of lokan only appeared around 15 years ago, following the tsunami. Its relatively recent presence means that the community is not yet accustomed to processing and utilizing it as a food source. As a result, this potential resource remains underutilized, even though processed products like lokan crackers could have high market value and support the local economy.



Figure 1. Average size of Sarah River lokan.

Despite having easy access for tourists and abundant natural resources, the local community faces significant challenges in developing economic enterprises, particularly in producing and marketing lokan crackers. The processing of lokan into crackers is still done traditionally and lacks consistent standards for raw materials, resulting in products that vary in color and taste (Figure 2). According to a local resident, this variation in production is caused by differences in the measurements, types of raw materials, and processing methods used in making lokan crackers. This inconsistency affects the quality and sustainability of production. Lokan cracker production is highly dependent on seasonal demand, which tends to peak during holidays when the number of tourists surges. This unstable production pattern results in uncertain income for the community, making it difficult for them to further develop their businesses or reach a broader market.



Figure 2. Variability in lokan crackers produced by the local community, showcasing differences in size, color, and taste due to traditional processing methods.

Additionally, lokan crackers from Gampong Lamseunia are not widely recognized, either locally or regionally. A lack of knowledge and skills in marketing strategies, both traditional and digital, hinders their ability to access a broader market. Studies have shown that utilizing digital marketing technologies, such as Google My Business and social media, can expand product reach and enhance brand image (Yarlina *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, improving the quality of product packaging can add value and attract consumers. Further research indicates that innovation in processing and packaging technologies can significantly improve the quality of local products and expand market reach (Arseto *et al.*, 2024). These challenges also present opportunities for the development of the local economy. Given its strategic location—close to tourist centers and major transportation routes—the village has great potential to expand production and marketing. However, several issues hinder the optimal utilization of this potential. First, the community's capacity and knowledge in producing lokan crackers remain limited, particularly in terms of technology, hygiene, and innovation in production equipment. Although drying technology has been introduced, other stages of production are still carried out traditionally, limiting efficiency and scalability. Second, the lack of managerial skills among the community results in inconsistent production, both in terms of quality and quantity. This inconsistency makes it difficult to sustain production, even on a small scale. Third, limited knowledge of marketing strategies restricts the market reach of lokan crackers, which are currently only available in Gampong Lamseunia and rely on buyers passing through the main road. The natural resources, such as the lokan-rich Sarah River, can be optimally utilized through the development of advanced processing technologies and improved community skills. With appropriate interventions, such as training in modern production technologies and digital marketing strategies, the people of Lamseunia can increase the quality and quantity of their lokan cracker production. Furthermore, optimizing marketing through social media and collaborations with local tourism players can be a strategic step to boost product popularity and expand the market both locally and regionally. The main objective of this activity is to enhance the production and marketing of the economic enterprises in Gampong Lamseunia, enabling them to optimally and sustainably utilize the lokan potential. This activity will focus on two primary aspects :

- 1) Improving production skills through training on the use of more modern and efficient processing technologies; and
- 2) Developing effective marketing strategies to broaden the market reach for lokan crackers, both through social media and partnerships with tourism operators.

## METHOD

This community service program employed a series of structured activities aimed at enhancing the production and marketing of lokan crackers in Gampong Lamseunia. The activities included the identification problem, the dissemination and implementation of solutions, and the monitoring and evaluation of the results.

### 1. Problem Identification, Opportunities, and Challenges Using SWOT Analysis

The initial phase involved identifying the current problems, opportunities, and challenges faced by the lokan cracker industry in Gampong Lamseunia. The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis method was used in this process to gain a comprehensive understanding of the community's situation. This analysis was conducted in collaboration with several members of the community, including key community leaders. Through focused group discussions, information was gathered on existing resources, production limitations, market potential, and external threats. This method allowed for a detailed assessment of both internal and external factors that influence the success of lokan cracker production and marketing in the village.

### 2. Solution Determination and Dissemination

After the SWOT analysis, the next step was to identify and disseminate concrete solutions based on the findings. The aim of this activity was to propose practical interventions that would address the identified challenges and maximize the opportunities available. Community discussions and workshops were conducted to brainstorm potential solutions, which were then reviewed by community leaders and selected villagers. The chosen solutions included improving production techniques through training in modern processing technologies, enhancing packaging, and employing

digital marketing strategies. The dissemination of these solutions involved interactive sessions where community members were informed about the steps and benefits of the proposed interventions, preparing them for the application phase.

### 3. Application of Solutions

Following the dissemination of solutions, the next phase was their application within the community. This involved implementing the proposed interventions to improve the quality and marketing of lokan crackers. Key activities included training sessions for community members on modern lokan processing methods, aimed at standardizing production to achieve consistent quality in terms of taste and appearance. Additionally, training on packaging techniques and digital marketing was conducted to enhance product appeal and market reach. During this phase, community members actively participated in learning and adopting these new methods, with guidance from trainers and facilitators.

### 4. Monitoring and Evaluation of Production and Marketing

To ensure the effectiveness of the implemented solutions, ongoing monitoring and evaluation were carried out. This phase focused on assessing both the production process and the marketing strategies to identify areas of improvement. The monitoring involved regular check-ins with the lokan cracker producers to evaluate their adherence to the new production standards and to identify any challenges they faced. The marketing aspect was also monitored by tracking product sales, market reach, and customer feedback through both traditional and digital platforms. Evaluation meetings were conducted to review the progress of the initiative, with feedback from community members and leaders used to refine and adjust strategies as necessary.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Results*

The program to enhance the production and marketing capabilities of lokan crackers in Gampong Lamseunia was implemented through a series of systematically designed activities. This initiative has yielded positive outcomes and has had a significant impact on the members of the local economic group. The following is a summary of the outcomes of each phase of the activities carried out :

#### 1. Site Survey and Coordination with Group Members and Village Authorities

The program began with a site survey aimed at coordinating with the economic group members and village authorities. The survey was conducted to assess the current situation and to secure the full commitment and support of all parties involved. During the meetings, the village authorities and group members agreed to support this program to its fullest, with the hope of improving the economic welfare of the Gampong Lamseunia community. This agreement established a crucial foundation to ensure the program's sustainability and active participation from all partners.

#### 2. Trial Production of Lokan Crackers by an Experienced Trainer

Following the initial coordination, a trial production of lokan crackers was conducted by an experienced trainer specializing in small-scale seafood-based industries. This trial aimed to evaluate the quality of the lokan available in Gampong Lamseunia and to adjust the appropriate processing techniques. The trial revealed that the lokan from the Sarah River possessed high quality, making it an excellent raw material for crackers with a unique taste and texture, thereby adding significant value to the final product. This trial also served as the foundation for subsequent training, providing the partner members with a concrete example of the potential that could be developed.

#### 3. Training on Lokan Cracker Production for Partner Members

The next phase involved training the members of the economic group in Gampong Lamseunia on lokan cracker production. This training was facilitated by the experienced trainer who had previously conducted the trial production. During this session, participants gained an in-depth understanding of the production process, from raw material selection, dough preparation, molding, to frying techniques. The hands-on practice and interactive discussions allowed

participants to freely ask questions and discuss various production tips and marketing strategies. The results of the training indicated that the production process has started to follow the set standards. Each group member successfully produced lokan crackers using the provided materials. However, there were still challenges regarding the uniformity of the cracker cuts. Achieving consistent cuts requires specific skills and proper equipment, which is not currently available. This challenge opens up opportunities for future innovation in creating cutting tools that can be used to enhance the quality and consistency of the product.

#### 4. Product Packaging Training

The final part of the training series focused on the packaging of lokan crackers. Proper packaging is a key aspect in attracting consumer interest and increasing the market value of the product. During this training, partner members were introduced to various modern packaging techniques that not only protect the product from damage but also enhance its aesthetic appeal. The participants practiced how to create attractive packaging that meets product marketing standards. The results showed that participants were capable of producing professional and appealing packaging, which is expected to boost the competitiveness of lokan crackers from Gampong Lamseunia in broader markets. They also gained an understanding of the importance of packaging, with their products now packaged attractively to add value.

#### 5. Marketing and Branding

In an effort to expand market reach, there have been positive developments, although the increase in sales has not yet been significant. The lokan crackers are now being sold in kiosks located in tourist areas and along the main roads, utilizing local potential as a marketing medium. Additionally, the introduction of varied packaging offers consumers more choices, further enhancing the product's appeal. The creation of a product brand has also been a significant achievement in this program. The brand has started to be promoted through social media to increase public awareness of the product. Although this promotional effort is still in its early stages, it holds potential for expanding market opportunities.

### Discussion

The implementation of the program in Gampong Lamseunia has shown promising potential for the development of lokan cracker production. The SWOT analysis at the onset of the project highlighted several key strengths, including the abundance of raw materials, the unique taste of lokan crackers, strategic location for direct sales, and the potential to become an exclusive souvenir. These factors align with findings by (Prayogi, 2017), which suggest that leveraging unique local resources and proximity to tourist centers can significantly boost the appeal of traditional products to tourists seeking authentic culinary experiences. Additionally, research by Erlyana (2019) highlights the importance of packaging design in influencing consumer buying interest, particularly in retail markets. Using the VIEW model (Visibility, Information, Emotional Appeal, Workability), Erlyana found that visibility and emotional appeal significantly impact consumer decisions, while packaging as a whole plays a crucial role in attracting buyers. This insight underscores the importance of developing attractive and functional packaging for lokan crackers, aligning with their potential as an exclusive souvenir for tourists. Opportunities such as the rising interest in unique local foods, a growing number of tourists, and an accessible transportation network further support the expansion of production and marketing efforts. Despite these strengths and opportunities, challenges such as limited production capacity and seasonal dependence were identified. Production, which currently fluctuates based on tourist seasons, lacks consistent marketing strategies and brand recognition. The training programs aimed to address these issues, focusing on enhancing production quality, introducing packaging methods, and promoting effective marketing strategies, including digital marketing. The training results indicate notable progress. Participants learned advanced production techniques, particularly in raw material selection and processing, which aligns with research by (Anam *et al.*, 2020) showing that specialized tools and techniques can improve product uniformity and quality. For example, introducing cutting tools for lokan cracker enhanced consistency in size and shape, addressing prior challenges of product variation. Similarly, a program in Jombang, Indonesia, demonstrated that implementing basic mechanization in food processing can increase efficiency and improve product appeal (Anah *et al.*, 2020). However,



achieving uniformity in cracker cuts remains a challenge, highlighting the need for future innovations in production tools. The marketing and branding aspects of the program also demonstrated encouraging results. Training on packaging improved the aesthetic appeal of the product, contributing to an enhanced market value. This outcome aligns with Safirin *et al.* (2023), who emphasized that attractive, informative, and sustainable packaging can influence consumer purchasing decisions and enhance brand image. The introduction of a brand name and the use of social media for promotion have started to increase consumer awareness. Comparative studies by (Putri *et al.*, 2023) and (Mas'udah *et al.*, 2022) show that strategic branding and effective packaging are critical for establishing a strong identity and reaching broader audiences. The program also benefited from promoting lokan crackers in kiosks and tourist areas, a strategy similar to that employed in local snack marketing in Nglanggeran Village, where collaborations with tourism operators significantly boosted product sales (Sukarno *et al.*, 2023). The integration of digital marketing strategies remains a pivotal aspect of the program. Studies (Wijaya *et al.*, 2021) and Faridah and Wulandari (2020) demonstrate that platforms like Instagram and Facebook effectively enhance the visibility of local products and facilitate consumer engagement. Likewise, Jatmiko (2022) found that digital marketing helps small enterprises overcome distribution challenges and expand market access. (Ainiyah *et al.*, 2022) further highlight the potential of using dynamic platforms like TikTok for local products. Their study on fruit and vegetable marketing emphasized the effectiveness of engaging content such as storytelling, tutorials, promotions, and customer testimonials in capturing audience interest and boosting sales. Applying similar strategies for lokan crackers could enhance their appeal and visibility among diverse audiences. Additionally, the findings of (Asrah *et al.*, 2024) emphasize the importance of building digital literacy and internet access to enable effective utilization of such platforms, suggesting the need for targeted training programs in Gampong Lamseunia. By optimizing digital marketing through strategies such as storytelling and endorsements, lokan crackers can reach broader markets and strengthen their presence. Overall, this program has laid a strong foundation for the sustainable development of lokan crackers in Gampong Lamseunia. The training and discussions with experts have increased the local community's knowledge and readiness to expand their business. However, continued focus on overcoming production challenges, refining marketing strategies, and adopting technological innovations will be crucial for the sustained success and growth of this community-based enterprise. Optimizing digital marketing through effective content strategies, such as storytelling and endorsements, can be the key to the success of marketing local products like lokan crackers.

## CONCLUSION

This community service program has successfully initiated significant enhancements in the production and marketing of lokan crackers in Gampong Lamseunia. Through comprehensive training and strategic interventions, local producers have gained valuable skills in production techniques, packaging, and marketing. Standardized processes and modern packaging have increased market appeal. While challenges remain in achieving uniform cracker cuts and market expansion, the program has set the stage for sustainable development, with a focus on digital marketing and advanced production technology to ensure long-term economic benefits.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Funding for this study was granted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia (Grant number: 599/UN11.2.1/PM.01.01/SPK/PTNBH/2024) through the Research and Community Service Institution (LPPM) at Universitas Syiah Kuala.

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