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# CREATING PRODUCT CREATIVITY TO OBTAIN PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATION IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF RATTAN PRODUCTS

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## ABSTRACT

The increasing diversity and attractiveness of rattan products have intensified competition in the rattan industry, both domestically and internationally. This has led to a situation where the global impact of rattan trade is largely dominated by countries such as China, Taiwan, and Europe, in addition to Indonesia. The main objective of this research is to explore how product creativity affects product differentiation, ultimately enhancing the marketing performance of rattan products in Cirebon Regency. The study focused on all rattan business actors in the region, with a sample size of 210 respondents selected using Hair's formula. The data collection method involved a questionnaire and Probability Sampling technique. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). The findings revealed that Product Differentiation has a more significant impact on Marketing Performance compared to Product Creativity. This is because consumers are inclined towards unique products with distinct characteristics offered by companies.

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## INTRODUCTION.

Indonesia is blessed with a rich array of natural resources, which presents immense opportunities for industrial development within the country. The industrial landscape in Indonesia is thriving, with various sectors experiencing growth and success. Among these sectors, the rattan processing industry stands out as a major player, boasting a vast market both domestically and internationally. This industry's growth can be attributed to Indonesia's abundant supply of rattan, which opens doors for lucrative exports in the global market. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in Indonesia, exports are projected to exhibit positive growth in 2023. In fact, from January to June 2023 alone, exports are expected to reach a staggering \$128.66 billion, making a

significant contribution to the country's foreign exchange earnings. The export of high-quality raw materials serves as the backbone of Indonesia's economy, driving its progress and prosperity. As the export sector continues to flourish, its role in achieving economic stability becomes increasingly vital. However, sustaining this positive momentum requires continuous efforts to enhance product creativity and diversify export markets (Rendi Mahendra, 2023).

Rattan's popularity is on the rise due to its lightweight, strong, flexible, and affordable material specifications. The unique shapes that rattan can be crafted into also play a role in attracting consumer interest. With a wide variety of appealing rattan products flooding the market, competition within the industry is fierce both locally and internationally. As a result, countries like China, Taiwan, and Europe are also major players in the global rattan trade alongside Indonesia.

The fierce competition among rattan industries, both locally and globally, has prompted numerous countries to recognize the significant economic potential that can be achieved through innovation and product development in rattan-based handicrafts and furniture. Consequently, the international rattan trade is no longer solely dominated by Indonesian entrepreneurs, but also by those from developed nations like China, Taiwan, and Europe. Indonesia currently holds the third position (7.68%) in the global rattan trade, following China (20.72%) and Italy (17.71%). Cirebon Regency in Indonesia stands out as one of the leading areas for rattan handicraft production, boasting a higher number of companies engaged in exporting and importing rattan products compared to other regions in the country.

Table 1. BPS Number of Rattan Industry Business Actors in Cirebon Regency.

No	Years	Total
1	2018	1.408
2	2019	1.478
3	2020	1.480

Source: Data from BPS Cirebon Regency.

According to the data provided by BPS, the analysis of table one reveals that the number of individuals involved in the rattan business has remained consistent from 2018 to 2020, with an average of approximately 1,455. These individuals are specifically engaged in exporting rattan handicraft products in the global market, within Cirebon Regency. Among the various industrial sectors in Cirebon Regency, the rattan handicraft center stands out as a highly favored industry. The Rattan Handicraft industry possesses significant potential to emerge as a prominent commodity within Cirebon Regency.

Cirebon Regency, situated in West Java province, is renowned for being the primary producer of high-quality rattan. This regency, known for its dense population, boasts numerous tourist attractions and thriving creative industry hubs that contribute significantly to the local economy. These include the Meubeul/Rattan Handicraft Industry, Wooden Meubeul, Nature, Batik, and Snacks. Among the various industrial centers in Cirebon Regency, the rattan handicraft sector stands out as a prominent player. With its immense potential, the Rattan Handicraft industry has the capability to emerge as the leading commodity of Cirebon Regency.

Rattan handicraft products must possess a high level of creativity in order to achieve a high selling value and attract consumers. This creativity is crucial in developing innovative ideas that bring novelty to the products. The growth of the retail industry is influenced by various factors, including population growth, the influence of media and global trends on consumer behavior, and the increasing level of consumer confidence in products (Fatimah, 2023). Creativity serves as the foundation and catalyst for innovation, enabling the development of new and groundbreaking works (Rumanti et al., 2023). However, it is important to note that different customers perceive creativity differently based on their cultural backgrounds, social norms, and living standards (Xu, 2020). This implies that individuals from diverse contexts may have varying perceptions of what constitutes creative new products (Vo et al., 2022). Previous discussions have identified specific criteria or dimensions that can distinguish human creativity from artificial creativity (Mark, 2023). Creativity

has the power to generate limitless and unique ideas that surpass the boundaries of established rules and norms. For organizations, the success of their products heavily relies on their ability to foster and manifest creativity (Chan & Cho, 2022).

In order to meet the needs and desires of consumers, innovation of a product is crucial (Prastowo & Rahmadi, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to develop innovative strategies and steps to effectively inform and communicate with the public, particularly foreign tourists (Hartono et al., 2020). Alongside high creativity, product differentiation plays a vital role in fostering product innovation by distinguishing a company's products from those of its competitors (Chen et al., 2020). This is especially important when companies actively engage in product differentiation (Yuki & Kubo, 2023). Product differentiation serves as a marketing tactic employed by companies to set their products apart from competitors' offerings in the market (He, 2020). Moreover, the implications of product differentiation must be carefully considered (Chen et al., 2020). Product diversification can take various forms, including mixed, horizontal, and vertical diversification (He, 2020).

Creativity and product differentiation play a crucial role in the company's survival. The company's survival hinges on effective marketing performance. Sustaining product creativity and offering unique product differentiation to consumers sets the company apart from its competitors, leading to an increase in marketing performance (Nursal et al., 2022). Various factors, such as access to digital marketing, marketing orientation, and entrepreneurial orientation, influence the enhanced marketing performance of businesses (Junejo et al., 2022). Social capital can also impact marketing performance positively by fostering trust through network development and relationship building, aligning business vision and mission (Setini et al., 2021). A well-thought-out marketing strategy is essential to enhance marketing performance (Udayana et al., 2021). The collective methods, tools, and behaviors employed by marketing companies to plan and evaluate their marketing campaigns, achieve predetermined objectives, and make informed decisions are encompassed within the concept of marketing performance (Dhameria et al., 2021).

The variable in question has been extensively studied, and the findings of previous research conducted by Tesa Asashi in 2017 indicate that creativity has a notable and favorable impact on marketing performance. Another study by Harini et al. in 2022 demonstrates that product creativity meets the criteria of thorough research and has a positive influence on marketing performance. The effect of product differentiation on marketing performance is also supported by research conducted by Wulandari & Murniawaty in 2019, which establishes a significant and positive relationship between the two. Additionally, Stephen's research in 2021 affirms that product differentiation significantly affects marketing performance. However, there has been limited examination of all rattan companies in Cirebon Regency.

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT.**

**Product creativity** refers to a company's ability to innovate and develop new products that go beyond what is currently available in the market, in order to address unmet consumer needs. The key to successful new product development lies in having a thorough understanding of the product being developed, and leveraging existing knowledge within the industry to foster creative ideas. Consequently, it becomes crucial to explore various product concepts and carefully select the most optimal option from a range of possibilities, emphasizing the importance of having sufficient resources (Handayani et al., 2022). By focusing on the product itself and its interaction with the market, product creativity enables businesses to effectively respond to evolving market demands, thereby gaining a competitive edge (Tian et al., 2021). Recognized as a vital element in new product development and branding, product creativity plays a significant role in organizations by connecting individual employees, the immediate tasks at hand, and the broader strategic objectives of the company (Chibuzor, 2014; Tian et al., 2021).

This research assessed product creativity through three key indicators: Originality, transformation level, and feasibility. These indicators gauge the uniqueness, innovation, and practicality of a product, emphasizing both quality and inventive ideas. In order to stand out in the market, every business must strive for creativity in their product offerings. Creativity involves the capacity to generate fresh and unique concepts.

**H1:** Product creativity has a significant positive effect on marketing performance.

**Product Differentiation.** According to Kotler and Keller, Product Differentiation involves incorporating significant and beneficial distinctions to set a company apart from its rivals. A company distinguishes itself from competitors when they possess a unique quality that consumers deem important (Aziz et al., 2023). As stated by Basthan Imanuel Tarigan (2022), Product Differentiation entails modifying a product to enhance its appeal. Achieving a competitive edge over competitors necessitates thorough market research and understanding of their products. Product differentiation, employee innovation, and sustainable business practices are essential for enhancing performance and competitiveness (Albushairi & Huda, 2021). The impact of product differentiation on firm output, profitability, consumer satisfaction, social welfare, and resource allocation is analyzed by incorporating it into the resource allocation framework (Chen et al., 2020).

Based on Keller (2020), elements that signify product differentiation consist of: Form, Features, Performance Quality, Conformance Quality, Durability, Reliability, Repairability, Style, Design. Product form may be distinguished by its shape, size, or the overall physical composition of the product.

The correlation between product differentiation and marketing performance is significant. Effective product differentiation greatly enhances marketing performance, while poor product differentiation can lead to unsatisfactory results for small and medium-sized enterprises (UMKM) and fail to meet customer expectations (Winarso et al., 2023). Hence, it is crucial to prioritize product quality. Consequently, quality plays a pivotal role in determining the value and success of a company. Customer satisfaction with the product directly influences the company's performance. The better the product quality, the larger the customer base, underscoring the critical role of product quality in determining a company's success.

**H2:** Product differentiation has a significant positive effect on marketing performance.

**Marketing Performance** is often a challenge due to the complexities of measuring its effectiveness and efficiency. It is a crucial factor for organizations and companies to evaluate the impact of their marketing strategies on product market success. In today's digital age, marketing performance plays a significant role in determining the success of businesses. There are three main categories that define good marketing performance: sales, increased market share, and ultimately, profitability (Nursal et al., 2022).

Marketing performance is evaluated based on three key metrics: sales growth, customer growth, and sales volume. The effectiveness of a company's marketing efforts is determined by its marketing performance. Hence, marketing performance serves as a metric to gauge the potential success of a company's products in the market (Mark, 2023). Meanwhile, the three key indicators that make up marketing performance are Sales growth, Customer growth, and Sales volume (Harini et al., 2022).

## **METHOD.**

This study employs quantitative research methodology. It utilizes hypotheses as tools to support research based on theory or previous studies (Uma & Roger, 2013). The research population consists of all rattan business actors in Cirebon Regency. Probability sampling is used as the sampling technique. The sample size is determined using the formula by Hair Jr et al (2017), where if the population size is unknown, the sample size can be calculated by multiplying the number of questions by 10. In this study, the sample size was 210 (Hair, 2009). The data analysis method employed is Structural Equation Modeling- Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). PLS-SEM is used to identify relationships between constructs and assess predictive relationships. This method is suitable for theory-building research, even in the absence of a strong theoretical foundation. PLS-SEM is particularly promising for researchers in marketing and management information systems. It is a regression-based approach that minimizes residual variance in endogenous components (Hair et al., 2011).

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION.**

**Results.**

**Respondent Demographic.**

The objective of this study is to examine the demographic attributes of the participants engaged in the population survey concerning rattan business individuals in the Cirebon Regency region. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 2 provided.

Table 2. Respondent Demographic.

Categories	Description	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	120	57,1
	Women	90	42,8
Ages	< 20	21	10
	20 – 30	121	57,6
	≥ 30	68	32,4
Duration of Entrepreneurship	1 - 3 years	86	40,9
	≥ 5 years	71	33,8
	≥ 10 years	53	25,2

Source: Primary data processed, 2024.

Table 2 demonstrates that the workforce in rattan companies is largely comprised of men, making up 57.1% of employees who are over 20 years old and have been working for 3 to 10 years. This is due to the fact that effectively managing business and production operations requires significant physical strength and energy, leading to a predominance of male workers. As a result, the majority of individuals engaged in business activities in this study are men. Female labor, on the other hand, is mainly utilized for tasks that involve finishing touches, as they do not require as much physical energy.

**Validity and Reliability Test.**

Table 3. Convergent Validity.

Construct	Measurement Items	Loadi ng	AVE
Product Creativity	PC1	0.82	0,66
	PC2	0.70	
	PC3	0.78	
	PC4	0.90	
	PC5	0.74	
	PC6	0.89	
Product Differentiation	PD1	0.78	0,59
	PD2	0.75	
	PD3	0.73	
	PD4	0.73	
	PD5	0.77	
	PD6	0.76	
	PD7	0.79	
	PD8	0.80	
	PD9	0.78	
Marketing Performance	MP1	0.86	0,70
	MP2	0.85	
	MP3	0.85	
	MP4	0.80	
	MP5	0.83	
	MP6	0.82	

Source: Primary data processed, 2024.

Table 3 reveals factor loadings exceeding 0.6, indicating that it effectively represents the construct for conducting research and validates the variable indicators. Based on the calculations presented in table 3, it can be inferred that all measurement items for variables in this study are valid. In order to demonstrate the precision, accuracy, and consistency of the instrument in measuring constructs, composite reliability testing is performed. The results of the composite reliability calculation are presented below:

Table 4. Composite Reliability.

	<b>Composite Reliability</b>
Product Creativity	0,921
Product Differentiation	0,929
Marketing Performance	0,935

Source: Primary data processed, 2024.

The reliability test, as indicated by the composite reliability value in table 4, demonstrates a value greater than 0.70. Consequently, it can be concluded that all items pertaining to the variables shown are reliable. In the context of PLS, the reliability test is further reinforced by Cronbach's alpha, where the value generated by all constructs is considered to be highly satisfactory, specifically exceeding 0.6. Referring to the findings presented in Table 3, it can be inferred that all construct indicators are reliable and successfully pass the reliability test.

**Evaluation of Measurement Model (Iner Model - Structural Model).**

Table 5. Total Effect.

	<b>Marketing Performance</b>
Product Creativity	0,260
Product Differentiation	0,602

Source: Primary data processed, 2024.

The measurement model evaluation results can be seen in Table 5 above, showing that competitive advantage is partially influenced by 26% Product Creativity. Product Differentiation partially affects Marketing Performance by 60%. Then, the structural model is evaluated using R-square ( $R^2$ ) for the dependent construct with its independent constructs.

Table 6. R- Square Value.

	<b>R- Square</b>
Marketing Performance	0.70

Source: Primary data processed, 2024.

From Table 6 above, there is an R-Square value for the Marketing Performance variable of 0.70 or 70% which means it is in the medium category so that Marketing Performance can be explained simultaneously through Product Creativity and Product Differentiation.

To show the extent to which the accuracy and viability of the overall model serves as validation in PLS-SEM, it should be tested using the Goodness of Fit (GOF) hypothesis test.

Table 7. Goodness of Fit (GoF).

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.076	0.076
d ULS	1.333	1.333
d G	2.576	2.576
Chi-square	1943.472	1943.472
NFI	0.613	0.613

Source: Primary data processed, 2024.

It can be seen from table 7, the SRMR value is  $0.076 < 0.1$  and the NFI value is 0.613 (closer than 1) so it is concluded that the data has described the overall model or the model fits the data. The Structural Model Path Diagram can be seen from the figure below:

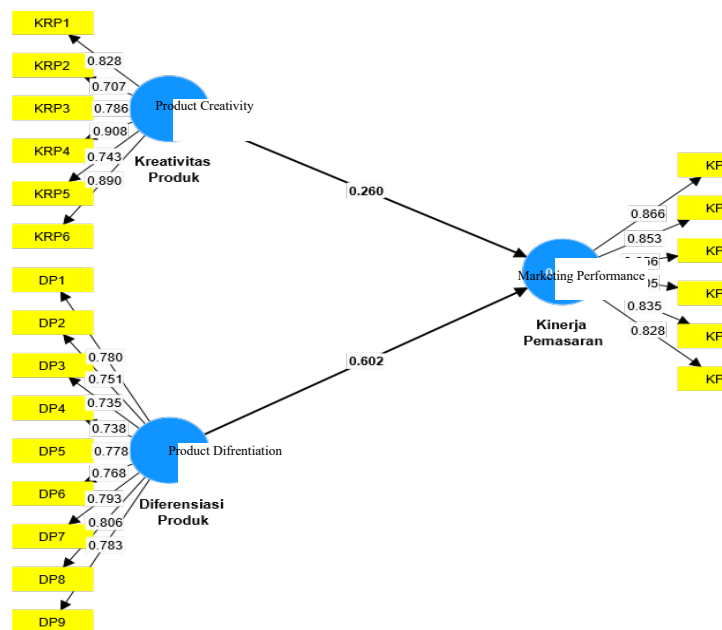


Figure 1. Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model - Measurement Model).

Product Differentiation variables have a direct influence on the development of Marketing Performance. Meanwhile, judging from the indicator Product Creativity, Product Differentiation activities on the easy-to-fix indicator (X2.8) have the highest influence on strengthening Marketing Performance (Nugraha & Masithoh, 2023).

**Hypothesis Test.**

The results of Hypothesis Testing can be seen in Table 8 below:

Table 8. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing.

		t-statistic	Result	P Values
<b>PD -&gt; MP</b>	1	6.184	<b>Accepted</b>	0.000
<b>PC -&gt; MP</b>	2	2.642	<b>Accepted</b>	0.008

Source: Primary data processed, 2024.



Based on calculations using bootstrapping, where the test results of the PD estimation coefficient on MP with a t-statistic value of 6,184 and a p value of  $0.000 < 0.05$  so that H1 is accepted, which means that the direct effect of PD on MP is statistically significant. Furthermore, the test results of the PC estimation coefficient on MP with a t-statistic value of 2.642 and a p value of  $0.008 < 0.05$  so that H2 is accepted.

### **Discussion.**

#### **Product Creativity has a direct effect on Marketing Performance.**

According to the findings from the hypothesis testing in Table 8, it is evident that Product Creativity plays a crucial role in influencing Marketing Performance. These results lead to the conclusion that having a higher level of Product Creativity can significantly enhance the Marketing Performance of rattan handicraft businesses in Cirebon Regency. Furthermore, the analysis reveals a strong and positive correlation between Product Creativity and Marketing Performance. This suggests that companies in the creative industry can achieve better Marketing Performance by focusing on developing more innovative and creative products. Additionally, it was discovered that Product Differentiation acts as a mediator in the relationship between Product Creativity and Marketing Performance, highlighting the importance of this factor in driving business success.

The results align with previous research by Tesa Asashi (2017), which highlights the significant and positive impact of creativity on Marketing Performance. Nida (2022) study indicates that Product Creativity influences Marketing Performance. Additionally, Harini et al. (2022) show that Product Creativity meets rigorous research criteria and has a positive effect on Marketing Performance. Sitohang (2008) research also confirms that Product Creativity has a significant impact on Marketing Performance (Yamin, 2021).

#### **Differentiation has a direct effect on Marketing Performance.**

The results displayed in table 7 indicate that Product Differentiation plays a crucial role in influencing Marketing Performance. The analysis reveals a strong and positive impact of Product Differentiation on Marketing Performance, particularly within the rattan business sector in Cirebon Regency. As Product Differentiation increases, Marketing Performance also sees a notable improvement. This suggests that enhancing the level of Product Differentiation in a rattan product brand leads to better Marketing Performance outcomes (Shim & Goh, 2022).

Wulandari & Murniawaty (2019) support this research by highlighting a significant and positive correlation between product differentiation and Marketing Performance. Similarly, Stephen (2021) and Heng (2017) both affirm that Product Differentiation has a substantial effect on Marketing Performance. These findings align with established marketing theories that underscore the importance of Product Differentiation in delivering value to consumers and gaining a competitive edge (He & Deng, 2020).

### **CONCLUSION.**

The impact of Product Creativity on Marketing Performance is undeniably positive and significant, with a remarkable increase of 26%. The analysis further reveals a strong correlation between Product Creativity and Marketing Performance, suggesting that companies in the creative industry can achieve better marketing outcomes by offering more innovative products. Additionally, the study highlights the role of Product Differentiation as a mediator in this relationship. Product Differentiation has a substantial impact on Marketing Performance, with a notable increase of 60%. The findings align with marketing theories that emphasize the significance of Product Differentiation in creating added value for consumers and gaining a competitive edge. In essence, the higher the level of Product Differentiation in a rattan product brand, the greater the Marketing Performance that can be attained.

Among the two factors mentioned earlier, Product Differentiation has the greatest impact on Marketing Performance for rattan business players in Cirebon Regency, while Product Creativity has a lesser impact. The order of influence, from highest to lowest, is Product Differentiation (60%) and Product Creativity (26%). These findings suggest that enhancing product creativity can lead to improved Marketing Performance for rattan handicraft businesses in Cirebon Regency. Moreover, an

increase in Product Differentiation can positively influence the Marketing Performance of rattan business players in Cirebon Regency.

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