

Analysis of Operational Management in Culinary Business: A Qualitative Study on Production and Service Management

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Article Information		Abstract
Submission date	4 February 2026	Research aim: Analyzing the micro cuisine business "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" in Nganjuk operational management in terms of production and service management. Design/Method/Approach: Owners, staff, and clients were interviewed using a descriptive qualitative method. The data was analyzed using the interactive Miles and Huberman model with source triangulation. Research Finding: The study's conclusions indicate that this company's success is built on three main pillars: consistent product quality, friendly and accommodating customer service, and the ability to adapt to shifting environmental conditions. Theoretical contribution/Originality: These results support the theory about the importance of human capital and operational discipline in the performance of MSMEs, as well as providing helpful insights into incremental innovation and differentiation strategies for micro-enterprises in rural areas. Practitioner/Policy implication: Providing legislators and MSME owners with a tool to enhance the operational efficiency and service quality of small-scale food businesses. Research limitation: This research is limited to a single case study that concentrates on a single rural company. Keywords: Operational Management, Service Quality, MSMEs.
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1. Introduction

The culinary industry is one of the main sectors that significantly contributes to the growth of Indonesia's creative economy. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative industry reports that in 2023, the culinary subsector accounted for around 41% of the GDP of the creative industry. This figure highlights the significance of culinary MSMEs in supporting the nation's economy. Maya Kartika Chandra Kirana and Hery Purnomo's study focuses on the operational management analysis of the micro cuisine business "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" in Nganjuk, East Java.

Examining customer service and production management at the restaurant "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu," as well as identifying operational issues and solutions in the context of rural microbusinesses, are the goals of this study. Effective operational management is critical to the success of small businesses. MSMEs' sustainability mostly depends on their operational efficiency[1]. Business actors must be able to minimize waste and maximize resource use to guarantee business continuity. MSME actors' ability to manage resources, production processes, and customer service determines a company's survivability in the face of limited funding and technology[1]. This business was founded in August 2025 and specializes in treats including risol mayo, chicken Cireng, and purple sweet potato balls. Despite being located in a remote area, this company has a huge market potential because its products are cheaply priced and made fresh every day.

According to earlier studies, operational management aids in maintaining product quality and achieving effective resource usage [2][3]. Nonetheless, the bulk of studies continue to focus on medium-sized enterprises in urban regions, whereas MSMEs in rural regions encounter distinct obstacles like restricted access to raw materials, distribution centers, and human resource capability. The greatest way to understand how management and staff in culinary enterprises handle their daily challenges is through qualitative research.

In production management, business owners employ a simple yet well-considered approach. He determines the daily material requirements based on his sales experience and carries out the production process in preset steps, such as preparing ingredients, steaming sweet potatoes, mashing, shaping the dough, adding filling, coating with flour, and frying till cooked. The concept of Production Planning and Control, which emphasizes the balance of input, process, and output, is in line with this tactic. The owner strives to maintain consistency in flavor and ingredient ratios in compliance with the standards of standardized recipes in culinary operational management.

Regarding service, the owners and employees are committed to maintaining timeliness, hygiene, and friendliness. Customers were happy with the product's flavor's consistency and the seller's manner. Customer service is essential to MSME management since it promotes long-term loyalty[1]. The application of this concept in the "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" business is demonstrated by the customers' desire to keep buying and referring the product to others.

To keep up with the latest culinary trends, the proprietor plans to develop new flavor varieties. This illustrates the implementation of Hery Purnomo's simple innovation strategy, which is incremental innovation according to the available resources and skills. Despite being in a distant location, this company has plenty of room to grow if it can expand its distribution and marketing. Based on interviews with three sources, owners, staff, and customers this provides a deeper knowledge of operational management strategies at the culinary business "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu". The owner explained that each stage of the manufacturing process is

completed separately, from selecting raw materials and processing to overseeing the final product. He emphasized the importance of uniformity and quality control at all industrial levels.

The results of the interviews show that the ability to innovate customer service, and product quality are the three main pillars supporting this company's success. To maintain product quality, standard recipes are utilized consistently and under constant observation. Customer service responds to criticism in a kind and considerate manner. Product innovation is done in stages to adapt to trends without changing the core of the product.

The operational management theory, which maintains that MSMEs' performance depends on their ability to manage resources consistently and effectively rather than only money, is supported by this study[1]. This business also seems to be employing Porter's differentiation strategy, which highlights the unique taste and product quality, to gain a competitive advantage in the local market.

This study shows that the success of the "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" culinary venture depends not only on the flavor of the product but also on the owner's ability to manage the manufacturing process and customer service. From a production standpoint, consistent product quality is ensured via direct supervision and the use of fresh ingredients. In terms of customer service, friendly manners and open communication help to build a good rapport between the seller and the customer. This bolsters Hery Purnomo's claim that the human factor is the most important component of MSME sustainability.

The theoretical contribution of this work is to advance understanding operational management in the micro culinary sector, particularly in rural regions. From a practical standpoint, this study provides an example of how simple, yet dependable management can lead to customer satisfaction and long-term business survival. The primary limitations of this study are its small sample size and focus on a single business location. Future studies could compare several culinary SMEs in different places to give a more complete picture.

Although operations management in the food industry has been extensively studied, most of it concentrates on urban medium-sized businesses. This study fills a gap in literature by highlighting the challenges and strategies faced by culinary MSMEs in rural areas. As a result, this study greatly advances our knowledge of how remote small businesses can achieve high operational efficiency and competitiveness. Managerial literacy is an important foundation for improving the capabilities of MSME actors so they can compete in an increasingly complex business environment[4]. They say that businesses must understand basic management tasks such as planning, organizing, and controlling in order for the business to survive.

Tax compliance is another strategic challenge that MSMEs must deal with. Even if

correct compliance not only satisfies administrative needs but also expands access to financing resources, many MSME actors still do not have a sufficient awareness of their tax duties[5]. This demonstrates how crucial tax literacy is to maintain long-term viability and operational stability. The digital economy's explosive expansion, however, brings with it both opportunities and difficulties. Digitalization offers advantages like increased market reach, more effective business procedures, and better consumer communication. Thus, one of the main factors influencing MSME competitiveness in the contemporary market is their capacity to embrace digital technologies. Support this viewpoint by highlighting the importance of innovation and adaptability as indicators of MSME sustainability[6], while consistent application of management functions, particularly in production and service operations, can greatly lower risks and increase effectiveness[7]. Additionally, as part of their operational strategy, MSME actors need to build sufficient digital capabilities. Digital literacy is now an essential part of competitiveness[8]. MSMEs are expected to use digital tools strategically, such as online catalogs, noncash payment methods, and digital-based customer engagement, in addition to existing on digital platforms. These features improve client satisfaction and boost operational effectiveness.

Thus, the culinary company “Bola Bola Ubi Ungu” in Sudimoroharjo Village, Wilangan District, Nganjuk Regency, is the subject of this study’s case study. The goal of this study is to comprehend how microbusiness owners, while having few resources and administrative support, can efficiently manage production and service. This study will examine the strategies used by various culinary enterprises, pinpoint operational difficulties in the sector, and provide useful advice that owners of culinary enterprises may use to boost their performance in a cutthroat market.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Owners occasionally struggle with the scarcity of raw resources, which occasionally run out before they can be utilized, making it difficult to maintain production quality. Managing a high volume of feedback, dealing with baseless or hostile bad evaluations, and making sure that the feedback is converted into concrete improvement activities are additional obstacles.

1.2. Research Objectives

Examining production management at the restaurant “Bola Bola Ubi Ungu,” identifying customer service strategies employed, and describing various operational challenges and solutions encountered in the context of a rural micro-culinary industry are the objectives of the study. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of how small business owners manage production and services as well as how they adapt to various constraints that arise in their daily operations.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative technique to gain a thorough understanding of operational management procedures at the micro culinary business "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" in rural settings, specifically in Sudimoroharjo Village, Wilangan District, Nganjuk Regency. This approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive examination of the practices, mindsets, and challenges faced by business participants in various aspects of their operations.

Source and Sample Selection. This study involved three key informants who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement and relevance to the operational activities of the micro culinary business "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu." The selection aimed to obtain comprehensive and in-depth information regarding production management, service quality, and operational challenges. The informants consisted of the business owner, an employee directly involved in production and service processes, and a regular customer who directly experienced the quality of the products and services. Detailed information about the research informants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informants

No	Name	Position	Role in Business	Interview Data
1	Desy Verlinda Sari	Owner	Manages production, raw materials, and operations	15 October 2025
2	Noviatul Ulamail	Employee	Assists in production and customer service	15 October 2025
3	Ardrina Emyu Maharani	Customer	Regular buyer experiencing product and service	15 October 2025

Gathering of data. Direct observation, in depth interviews, and documentation were the three main methods employed to collect data. Data on production planning processes, raw material control, customer service strategies, and operational challenges were gathered through open and systematic interviews. Direct field observation was done during manufacturing and service processes to give an accurate picture of daily activities. Documentation in the form of activity logs, basic financial reports, and other operational evidence provided additional support for the legitimacy of the data.

Analysis of data. The collected data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data was initially carefully coded to identify key areas related to production management, quality, challenges, and innovation. After that, the coding results were grouped and created into distinct patterns that reflected the operating procedures of the company. In order to verify the accuracy and dependability of the data, source triangulation was then

carried out by contrasting and verifying information from observations, interviews, and documents.

Validity and triangulation. To lessen prejudice and boost trust in research findings, source triangulation is employed. The researcher verifies the accuracy and consistency of the interpretations by comparing observational and documentary data with interview results from different sources. It is anticipated that this triangulation will present an accurate and thorough view of the company's operational management procedures.

Conformity to the goals of the research. By describing operating procedures, identifying major obstacles, and examining the tactics used by business players to get around different restrictions in rural locations, this methodology particularly helps the research aims. It is intended that this method will provide a comprehensive understanding of how micro-enterprises manage to thrive, grow, and enhance the quality of their services while having few resources.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 General Business Overview

"Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" is a type of micro-enterprise that operates in the snack food industry. Located in Sudimoroharjo Village, Wilangan District, Nganjuk Regency, East Java, this company was founded in August 2025. Mayonnaise risol, chicken cireng, and purple sweet potato balls are the primary goods offered. Due to its proximity to residential and educational sectors, the business location is in a highly important rural setting. This company has a devoted clientele and manages to thrive in the face of growing culinary competition despite operating in a small area. The company's owner, who also serves as chief manager, is closely involved in every aspect of business operations, including the procurement of raw materials, product processing, results monitoring, and customer support. This company has one person who assists with the production and sales process. Daily business operations occur between 8:00 and 17:00. The results of the observations demonstrate that, despite its small size, this business effectively utilizes the principles of operational management by using its resources wisely.

3.2 Production Management

The production method is self-managed and based on regular sales experience, according to the owner's interviews. The proprietor attested to the fact that in order to preserve the product's freshness and quality, raw materials such purple sweet potatoes, flour, and fillings are manufactured in small amounts. Every two days, complementing ingredients like wheat and cooking oil are bought in bulk for a week's worth of demands, while the raw materials are procured from the closest traditional market. Preparing the ingredients,

steaming the sweet potatoes, mashing them till smooth, mixing with flour, shaping the dough, adding the filling, coating with flour, and frying are the first steps in the production process. In order to create stable products, the production process in MSMEs needs to be organized through regular steps including raw material planning, standard production techniques, and daily quality check[1]. To guarantee that the product's outcomes don't alter, every step is completed in accordance with uniform criteria. The proprietor refused to use artificial coloring or artificial additives since they valued natural quality and distinctive flavor. The leftover dough is never used again the next day to avoid a decline in product quality. This study demonstrates that business operators have a high level of quality awareness even when they do not yet have defined operational procedures. This idea is consistent with explanation of Production Planning and Control[2], which aims to improve production efficiency and consistency by maintaining a balance between input, process, and output. Theory on MSME operational management[1], which is built on owner engagement across the entire production chain, the owner's direct application of personal quality control further demonstrates the significance of the human role in upholding quality standards. Workers are also responsible for keeping the production area tidy and on time. Before and after use, he makes sure that every piece of equipment is spotless and well-organized. Operational excellence may be implemented in MSMEs by standardizing manufacturing processes, cutting waste, and conducting ongoing quality control to make operational processes more reliable and effective[9]. Adopting this cleaning approach demonstrates a grasp of Total Quality Management (TQM), which holds each individual responsible for the quality of their own work. If the owner and staff are disciplined and communicate effectively, the production process can go smoothly.

3.3 Service Management and Customer Satisfaction

The results of customer interviews indicate that there is a high level of consumer satisfaction with the product and service. Customers describe the purple sweet potato balls as having a very distinctive flavor, being the ideal size, and being reasonably priced for their quality. Additionally, the prompt and friendly treatment puts customers at ease. Interpersonal connections between vendors and clients are MSMEs' greatest strengths since prompt, courteous service fosters enduring loyalty[1]. The concept of value co-creation, highlights how customers actively shape service quality through direct interaction and feedback, making customer-seller relationships a strategic factor for raising the caliber of MSME services[10]. The owner always greets tourists politely and is open to suggestions, and the staff strives to provide timely service so that visitors don't have to wait long. Interpersonal connections between vendors and clients are MSMEs' greatest strengths since prompt, courteous service fosters enduring loyalty. Regular promotional initiatives, such "buy three get one free" every Friday, are part of an intriguing service strategy[1]. This strategy has shown to be effective in attracting new customers while retaining existing ones. This organization actively accepts orders for minor events like birthdays and get-togethers in order to broaden its services. This

outcome demonstrates the "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" company's ability to continuously apply customer-focused service standards. The principle of Relationship Marketing, which emphasizes that the emotional tie between seller and consumer can establish long-term loyalty, is reinforced by friendly and customer-focused service[11]. Thanks to a customized approach and consistent flavor, customers not only buy the products but also form a relationship with the business.

3.4 Operational Challenges and Adaptation Strategies

The results of the interviews and observations indicate that the "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" company has several serious problems with the production process and operational management. The first challenge is the availability of raw resources. The owner revealed that the main ingredient, purple sweet potatoes, can often be difficult to find in regular markets, especially before harvest season. Production continuity may be affected because the quality of fresh cassava is essential to maintaining the product's flavor and texture. The owner used a flexible approach by establishing informal partnerships with local suppliers to ensure a consistent and excellent supply.

The second problem is maintaining product quality on a bigger production scale. When orders increase, as they do during holidays or community events, the production process becomes more crowded and faces the risk of losing the consistency of the flavor. To guarantee quality, the owner personally oversees every stage of production and does not delegate important duties, such as final frying or dough mixing, to others. This demonstrates the hands-on management approach and commitment to quality of the region's culinary MSMEs.

The third challenge is damage to industrial equipment, such as misused stoves or frying pans that quickly wear out. The owner realized that inadequate equipment could increase maintenance costs and slow down output. The owner prepared basic backup tools and conducted regular weekly inspections to ensure all equipment was in order.

Changing consumer preferences may pose a challenge. The business owner found that a variety of products was preferred by customers. In order to solve this, the proprietor started experimenting with straightforward improvements, such as giving the purple sweet potato balls other toppings (such as cheese, chocolate, and green beans) without altering the core flavor that patrons were already accustomed to. MSME resilience relies on quick adaptation, flexible processes, and incremental product innovation that is adapted to resource limitations. This approach is an example of incremental innovation[12], which is innovation implemented realistically in accordance with the capacity and competencies of the company[13].

All things considered, the adaptation tactics used show that the owner has strong managerial abilities in handling the volatility of microbusinesses. One of MSMEs'

competitive advantages, is their capacity to quickly adjust to market conditions, particularly when resources are scarce[1]. Flexible raw material management, scheduled equipment maintenance, and quantifiable product innovation demonstrate that this company can thrive and expand even in the face of constraints. This supports assertion that the ability of business owners to effectively manage production processes and react to market demands is just as important to the success of MSMEs as capital or technology[1].

3.5 Synthesis of Findings from Three Sources

The synthesis of interview data from the owner, employee, and customer reveals a complementary operational pattern rather than fragmented perspectives. Each informant highlights a different aspect of the business process, yet their explanations intersect and reinforce one another. From the owner's perspective, operational management is centered on maintaining product quality through direct supervision, careful raw material selection, and consistent production standards. Quality control is not implemented through formal written procedures but through hands-on involvement in every critical stage of production. The employee's perspective emphasizes discipline in execution. Punctuality, workspace cleanliness, and adherence to preparation routines become practical mechanisms that ensure the owner's quality standards are consistently applied. This indicates that operational stability in this micro-enterprise relies heavily on daily discipline rather than formal structural systems. Meanwhile, the customer evaluates the business from the outcome side. Taste consistency, fresh products, friendly interaction, and promotional strategies form the basis of satisfaction. Customers do not directly observe production control, yet they experience its results through stable flavor and reliable service.

When these three perspectives are viewed collectively, a clear thematic pattern emerges. The sustainability of the business is supported by three interconnected pillars:

- (1) consistent product quality,
- (2) customer-oriented service, and
- (3) adaptive responses to operational challenges.

Rather than functioning independently, these pillars interact dynamically. Production discipline supports taste consistency, service quality strengthens loyalty, and adaptability ensures continuity when facing raw material constraints or fluctuating demand. This synthesis confirms that the operational management of *Bola Bola Ubi Ungu* is practical, experience-based, and highly dependent on human involvement. The coherence among the three informants strengthens the validity of the findings and provides a solid foundation for the thematic discussion presented in the next section.

3.6 Thematic Discussion and Implications

Overall, the study's findings show that, despite financial and resource constraints, operational management at the "Bola Bola Ubi Ungu" company has been effectively carried out. The owner's active engagement in every step of the production process is crucial to the

company's success since it enables stringent oversight of time efficiency and quality. This supports argument that human capital and operational discipline are just as important to MSMEs' success as financial capital[1]. Employees are essential as technical support, facilitating smooth processes, while clients are an evaluative factor that defines a firm's longevity. By keeping solid ties and accepting customer feedback, this business successfully preserved loyalty and improved its stellar reputation in the community. This result validates assertion that the success of micro-cuisine businesses is determined by the quality of their services[14]. This company exhibits incremental innovation from an innovation standpoint, which is steady innovation in modifying menus and promotions without altering the primary characteristics of the product[13]. MSMEs in rural areas who have less finance but nevertheless try to keep up with market developments can use this strategy. In addition, the strategy implemented by the business also reflects differentiation strategy, in which competitive advantage is built through unique product characteristics and service quality rather than solely relying on price competition[15]. By maintaining consistent taste, fresh production, and personalized service, the business creates a distinct position in the local rural market. Consequently, this study shows that operational management techniques focused on customer service, quality control, and adaptability can increase the productivity and competitiveness of microcuisine firms. This result validates the theoretical assertion that MSMEs' success depends more on work discipline, personal accountability, and the ability to build strong customer relationships than on technology or large sums of money.

3.7 Interview Findings and Source Triangulation

To further validate the discussion presented in the previous sections, this study compared perspectives from three key informants: the business owner, one employee, and one customer of *Bola Bola Ubi Ungu*. Rather than introducing new themes, this section synthesizes how their views confirm and reinforce the operational patterns previously analyzed. Overall, the findings show a strong alignment between internal management practices and customer experience. The owner explains operational decisions and quality control efforts, the employee describes how these standards are implemented in daily activities, and the customer reflects the outcomes in terms of taste, service, and satisfaction.

Table 2. The synthesis of these perspectives

NO	Theme	Owner Perspective	Employee Perspective	Customer Perspective	Thematic Conclusion
1	Business Profile	Explains business name, location, and products	Assists daily snack production	Recognizes business as local snack seller	Home-based micro snack enterprise with risol mayo, chicken cireng, and

						purple sweet potato balls as main products
2	Product Quality	Maintains ingredient portions and consistent taste	Ensures products are freshly prepared daily	Experiences stable taste and generous fillings	Quality consistency becomes the main competitive strength	
3	Production Consistency	Uses fixed measurements in every batch	Follows the same preparation methods	Confirms no significant change in taste	Operational discipline supports product stability	
4	Service Quality	Prioritizes friendliness and responsiveness	Provides polite and efficient service	Feels comfortable and satisfied	Service interaction strengthens customer loyalty	
5	Operational Challenges	Faces raw material shortages and dough issues	Handles daily production constraints	Sometimes encounters products sold out	Flexibility is required to maintain continuity	
6	Complaint Handling	Open suggestions to and feedback	Communicates complaints directly to owner	Reports no significant complaints	High satisfaction reflects effective management	
7	Future Development	Plans product innovation	Hopes for wider recognition	Expects new variants and expansion	Business shows growth potential through adaptive strategy	

As shown in Table 2, the three perspectives complement each other and reveal a coherent operational system. Production consistency, service quality, and adaptability emerge as interconnected elements rather than separate components. Importantly, the interview findings confirm the earlier discussion on operational discipline and customer orientation. The consistency in taste perceived by customers reflects the owner's strict control over ingredient measurement and preparation methods. Likewise, positive service experiences correspond to the owner's and employee's commitment to friendliness and responsiveness.

Operational challenges, such as raw material shortages and high demand, further illustrate the need for flexibility in micro-enterprises. The owner's decision to secure alternative suppliers, even at higher costs, demonstrates a practical survival strategy that aligns with the adaptive approach discussed previously. In summary, the triangulated findings strengthen the argument that the sustainability of *Bola Bola Ubi Ungu* is supported by three closely related pillars: consistent product quality, customer-oriented service, and adaptive operational decision-making. These empirical confirmations reinforce the theoretical discussion presented in the earlier sections without introducing redundancy.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the operational management practices of the micro-culinary business *Bola Bola Ubi Ungu* in a rural setting. The findings show that business sustainability is not merely determined by product taste, but by how production processes, service quality, and operational decisions are consistently managed. From a production perspective, stability in ingredient measurement and preparation methods ensures consistent product quality. Although the business does not yet implement formal written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), operational discipline is maintained through direct supervision and routine practice. This consistency is clearly reflected in customer perceptions of stable taste and product freshness. In terms of service management, friendly interaction, responsiveness, and openness to feedback contribute significantly to customer satisfaction. The absence of major complaints indicates that interpersonal relationships between seller and customer play an important role in building loyalty. The study also highlights the importance of adaptability in managing operational challenges, such as raw material shortages and fluctuating demand. Flexible decision-making and quick responses allow the business to maintain continuity despite limited resources. Overall, the triangulated findings confirm that the sustainability of *Bola Bola Ubi Ungu* is supported by three interconnected pillars: consistent product quality, customer-oriented service, and adaptive operational management. These findings reinforce the argument that in micro-enterprises, human involvement, discipline, and responsiveness are often more decisive than capital or technology. The main limitation of this study lies in its focus on a single case within a rural context. Future research may compare multiple culinary micro-enterprises in different regions to provide broader insight into operational management practices and sustainability strategies.

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