# Evaluation of the Economic Impact on MSMEs Through the Car Free Day (CFD) Program at Merdeka Square, Medan City: A Case Study of Micro Enterprises in the CFD Environment

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#### Abstract

The Car Free Day (CFD) program at Merdeka Square in Medan City is one of the government's efforts to create a healthy public environment while encouraging economic growth through empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This study aims to determine whether the CFD program at Merdeka Square really has a significant impact on increasing the income of micro businesses. The study used a qualitative method with a case study approach, involving observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The results of the study showed that the CFD program had a significant impact on increasing the income of MSMEs, with some traders recording a turnover of up to two million rupiah in one activity. However, challenges such as tight competition and limited selling time are still faced by business actors. Better location planning and the elimination of stall rental fees have helped improve trader comfort. Thus, CFD has been proven to be a trigger for local economic growth and supports the sustainability of MSMEs in Medan.

#### INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a significant sector, playing a significant role in various economic interests in national development. Therefore, developing MSMEs and making them the center of the community economy will have a direct impact on economic stability and independence. (Sucahyo et al., 2023). Most of the MSMEs in Indonesia are home businesses that can absorb a lot of labor. (Tambunan, 2023) Therefore, the role of MSMEs is very significant in the economy, especially in reducing unemployment by creating more jobs.

MSMEs, which are part of the economy, must increase their competitiveness by implementing various business innovations to survive in difficult conditions and situations. One way to do this is by utilizing online media such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Facebook, and others to expand sales and marketing channels. These social media users

have the ability to communicate, participate, and create media content online easily. (Haryansyah et al., 2024) Every year, MSMEs in Indonesia experience quite significant growth. (Sucahyo et al., 2023) These MSMEs exist in various industries, such as digital technology, fashion, culinary, and handicrafts. (Waluyo, 2024).

Data collected by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs shows that the number of MSMEs will reach 65.5 million business units by 2024, a 1.7% increase from the previous year. Of this number, 97% are micro-enterprises, 2% are small businesses, and 1% are medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore, MSMEs contribute 97% of the national workforce. This demonstrates that MSMEs are the backbone of the Indonesian economy and play a vital role in job creation. (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2024). In general, MSMEs have a role as: (1) main actors in economic activities, (2) job providers, (3) important players in local economic development and community empowerment, (4) creators of new markets and sources of innovation, and (5) their contribution to the balance of payments (Al Farisi et al., 2022).

Currently, MSMEs are on a positive trend and continue to grow annually. This trend will have a positive impact on the Indonesian economy. MSMEs' contribution to Gross Domestic Product reached 61%, or IDR 9,580 trillion, a 2.3% increase from the previous year, according to data from the Central Statistics Agency. (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2024) This shows that MSMEs in Indonesia have great potential to grow and make an even greater economic contribution. (Tambunan, 2023) Adequate market access is crucial for small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to grow and survive. To increase sales, MSMEs need a place where they can meet customers. Because MSMEs play a crucial role in economic growth, local governments must maximize their empowerment. (Pahlawan et al., 2024).

In this context, various policies and programs have been designed by local governments to support the development of MSMEs. One program that has long been implemented in several large cities, including Medan, is the SME program. *Car Free Day* (CFD). One effort that can be made to connect businesses and consumers is Car Free Day (CFD). Previous studies have shown that CFD can effectively boost the economy of MSMEs. Furthermore, CFD can increase merchant revenue by three to five times compared to normal days. Previous research also shows that an additional function of CFD is to reach MSMEs that the government has not yet reached. Furthermore, CFD benefits the environment. The CFD program actually aims to improve clean air quality, enhance public transportation, and reduce car use. (Pahlawan et al., 2024).

This program is not only an effort to raise public awareness about the importance of a healthy and clean environment, but also creates new economic opportunities, especially for MSMEs operating around the CFD location. Before leaving his position as Mayor of Medan, the Medan City Government held CFD to fulfill Mr. Muhammad Bobby Afif Nasution's promise to improve the health and welfare of Medan City residents. (Medan, 2023)Merdeka Square in Medan, a hub of community activity, is a strategic location for CFD events. The area is always packed with people every weekend.

Most people who come to the CFD arena do leisurely walking and running around Medan City's Merdeka Square before exercising together on the CFD stage. Additionally, there is plenty of food and drink available, so many people sit down and enjoy their meal after working out. (Medan City Communications and Information Service, 2023). Micro-enterprises have the opportunity to market their products, from food and beverages to handicrafts, due to this large crowd. However, despite this significant potential, it is important to evaluate the extent to which the CFD program has a significant economic impact on MSMEs in the area, particularly micro-enterprises. Evaluating the economic impact of the CFD program is relevant because not all micro-enterprises are able to maximize the available opportunities.

Several challenges, such as intense competition, stall rental costs, and fluctuating visitor numbers, can impact the success of their businesses. A report from the Medan Tribune reported that "Several vendors reported that thugs had charged them for security and cleaning fees. Anugrah, a 27-year-old marketer who sells his company's merchandise, said he first set up his booth and charged thugs Rp 250,000. Those selling health products said they were shocked by the charges. He argued that Merdeka Square was unsuitable for mafia business because it is an open public space. He also said that thugs in the area often kicked down shops if they didn't receive their money." (Magribi, 2019).

To ensure that the benefits of the CFD program are felt equally, various stakeholders in local government, businesses, and the community need to support its sustainability. In this regard, it is important to understand how the CFD program at Medan's Merdeka Square works make a significant contribution to increasing the income and growth of micro-enterprises participating in these activities. Case studies of micro-enterprises in CFD environments are the primary focus of this article, as these businesses often serve as the backbone of families' economies and face limited resources compared to small and medium-sized enterprises. By evaluating the experiences of micro-enterprises operating in CFD areas, this article aims to provide a better understanding of the economic benefits they receive, the challenges they face, and the strategies they can implement to enhance their success.

Furthermore, this article will discuss how the CFD program can be a catalyst for the sustainable development of micro-enterprises. This includes an analysis of increasing public

purchasing power, opportunities for collaboration between business actors, and the government's role in creating a supportive ecosystem for MSMEs. Using this methodology, it is hoped that the evaluation results will help relevant parties optimize the impact of the CFD program, both in Medan City and in other regions with similar programs.

This study hopes to answer several important questions, such as: Does the CFD program in Merdeka Square truly have a significant impact on increasing micro-enterprise income? What are the main obstacles faced by micro-enterprise owners in this area? And how can the government and the community contribute to improving the program's effectiveness? By answering these questions, this article not only educates readers but also serves as a foundation for better policies in the future.

### **METHODS**

# Types of research

This study uses a qualitative research method, which is a descriptive type of research that typically utilizes analysis. Qualitative research often emphasizes the subject's perspective, process, and meaning, using a theoretical foundation to support it, ensuring it aligns with the situation on the ground. According to Danim, (Rita et al., 2022) There are five stages of qualitative research: determining research subjects, collecting field data, analyzing data, formulating research results, and making suggestions for decision making.

This research is a descriptive qualitative study. It uses a case study approach, which is a type of empirical inquiry that studies things that occur in the real world. The distinction between the phenomenon and the context of the problem is not clear-cut. The purpose of the case study approach is to study the social background of the current unit and its interactions with the environment. (Sugiyono, 2016).

The researcher served as the primary data collector in this study. The aim was to gather as much information as possible about the economic impact of the Car Free Day (CFD) program on MSMEs at Merdeka Square in Medan.

# Data collection technique

According to Sugiyono(2013), there are techniques for collecting qualitative data, namely:

## 1. Observation

Observation is the systematic observation and recording of a research subject's symptoms. Essentially, observation involves using the five senses to obtain information. A narrative or description of the research object is created from previously obtained data.

Researchers conducted observations on Sunday, from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. WIB. The observations were conducted to understand the impact and situation during Car Free Day (CFD) at Merdeka Square in Medan.

#### 2. Interview

An interview is a question-and-answer session between two people to exchange information so that it can be constructed in a meaningful way on a specific topic. Observation results will be explored in more depth using in-depth interview methods. This is one way to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.

In this case, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 5 MSME actors and 1 informant who was a member of the CFD committee to obtain more comprehensive information regarding the economic impact of the implementation of Car Free Day (CFD) at Merdeka Square, Medan City.

#### 3. Documentation

Documentation is the activity of collecting information visually, verbally, or in writing. Therefore, documentation can be defined as a record of past activities, events, or occurrences that has been recorded, collected, and archived. This documentation can be in the form of writings, drawings, or masterpieces created by someone.

Documentation collected during observations and interviews during Car Free Day (CFD) at Merdeka Square in Medan City was part of the research. In this case, the documentation collected from the CFD committee included a map of the MSME locations and the number of registered MSMEs.

# **Data Analysis Techniques**

According to Miles, Hubernan and Saldana (2014), there are three techniques in qualitative data analysis, namely:

# 1. Data condensation

The process of selecting, centralizing, simplifying, and abstracting written field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials is known as data condensation. Compression increases the reliability of the data.

# 2. Data display

Data display is the second major part of the analysis process. It is generally defined as an organized and concise set of data from which actions and conclusions can be drawn.

### 3. Conclusion/verification

As the third part of the analysis activity, drawing conclusions/verification serves to draw and confirm conclusions. From the beginning of data collection, qualitative analysts interpret meaning by recording patterns, explanations, causalities, and assumptions.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### Results

# General Overview and Physical Condition of the Medan City Car Free Day (CFD) Location

Car-free day(CFD) is a plan to manage traffic by closing certain sections of roads for a certain period of time so that people cannot pass through them during the activity. This activity is used by people around the city for exercise. (Ananda et al., 2021) The Medan City CFD is held around Medan's Merdeka Square. Its strategic location in the city center attracts a large number of visitors. CFD is a regular activity held to promote healthy lifestyles, reduce air pollution, and provide a friendly public environment. Typically, this activity takes place on Sunday mornings from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Western Indonesian Time.

In Medan, the CFD event attracts a large crowd, from children and teenagers to adults. Various activities are available during the CFD, such as cycling, gymnastics, jogging, and the presence of many MSMEs in the surrounding area. There is no entrance fee; as a public open space, anyone is welcome to visit. The CFD program itself is held on three streets: The Merdeka Square area, specifically along Jalan Pulau Pinang, Jalan Balai Kota, and Jalan Raden Saleh. The revitalization of Merdeka Square was completed and inaugurated on Wednesday (February 19, 2025), one day before Mr. Muhammad Bobby Afif Nasution ended his term as Mayor of Medan. (Medan, 2025) Public facilities are now increasingly complete, including toilets, jogging tracks, and spacious, beautiful fields.

In this case, the CFD at Merdeka Square, Medan City has several public facilities, including the following:

# a) Proclamation Monument



Source: Researcher Observations, 2025

Figure 1. Proclamation Monument

With the revitalization, the historical significance of Merdeka Square, located at the zero point of Medan City, is emphasized. The Proclamation Monument, located in Merdeka Square, continues to serve as a historical marker, indicating that this is where the text of the Proclamation was distributed throughout North Sumatra.

# b) Sports Area



Source: Researcher Observations, 2025

Figure 2Sports Area

This jogging track is built with comfortable materials for runners, has a special path for pedestrians, and is equipped with lighting and other public facilities such as seating, gardens, and rest areas.

# c) People's Stage



Source: Researcher Observations, 2025

Figure 3. People's Stage

This facility was built for the public or visitors who want to do activities or relax and also has other functions, including as a resting place for those who want to go to the central area of Merdeka Square.

# d) Parking area



Source: Researcher Observations, 2025

# Figure 4. Parking area

This area is used to park motorized vehicles and provides security for visitors. With this parking area, CFD visitors no longer have to worry about leaving their vehicles behind and can enjoy the facilities at Medan's Merdeka Square.

# e) Toilet

Toilets are available for use and serve as public facilities for the community at the CFD location and are also used by visitors to the CFD Merdeka Field, Medan City.

### f) Sales Area



Source: Researcher Observations, 2025

Figure 5. Sales Area

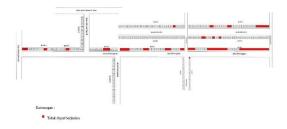
With the CFD, this activity can improve the welfare and economic growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Medan City. MSMEs can use the CFD as a platform to introduce their products, increase brand awareness, and build direct relationships with customers. Furthermore, government support in providing facilities also strengthens MSMEs' position in the market.

# Program Concept and Objectives Car Free Day(CFD) Medan City

An effort to reduce people's dependence on motorized vehicles is known as *Car Free Day*(CFD). This is an effort to encourage Indonesians to be healthier and exercise. This program has clearly become a major focus in the region. However, new functions have been added. From its initial focus solely on exercise, it has evolved into activities that encompass things beyond sports. *Car Free Day*(CFD) has developed into an event focused on *New Trend Activism* which allows city dwellers to relax and shop(Sucahyo et al., 2023).

For MSMEs, Car Free Day The weekly Community Development Day (CFD) held by the Medan City Government through the Youth and Sports Agency (Dispora) around Merdeka Square brings blessings. Most of the MSMEs participating in the CFD are fostered by the Medan City Government, and they participate not only to enliven the event but also to help boost the economy and realize thriving MSMEs. (Medan, 2023).

Mr. Taufik as one of the program's Implementing Committee Car Free Daysay: "The CFD event held at Merdeka Square aims to boost the economy and improve the welfare of MSMEs. MSMEs that previously sold their wares around Merdeka Square have now been relocated to the Kesawan area. This relocation aims to make the Merdeka Square area appear cleaner and more organized from all sides. Then, MSMEs are registered and data is collected, which is useful for mapping needs according to the MSME's condition. Currently, there are 600 MSMEs registered at this CFD." (Interview with CFD Committee, 2025).



Source: CFD Committee, 2025

Figure 6. UMKM Mapping Location Map

According to observations made during the Program Car Free Day(CFD), volunteers and the Mayor of Medan as the organizer have their own concept to ensure the event runs smoothly as intended. The local government only encourages and builds infrastructure such as roads around Medan's Merdeka Square to be used as a CFD area. Every Sunday morning, MSMEs are invited to choose a space provided according to the map according to their respective stall numbers to avoid disorder among vendors. Vendors can register manually with the committee near the CFD location. The government hopes that this CFD concept will hopefully become a center of economic turnover in Medan City and the surrounding areas.



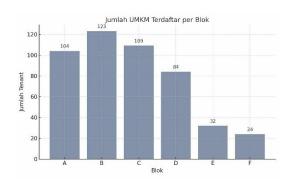
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2025

**Figure 7**. Interview with the CFD Committee

The researcher conducted an interview with Mr. Taufik as one of the program implementation committee. Car Free Day, regarding the number of traders in Medan City CFD. "Currently, 600 MSMEs have registered at this CFD, and this number is expected to grow after yesterday's mapping. However, sometimes not all MSMEs are present each week. For example, if the weather is rainy, perhaps only 300 to 400 MSMEs will be present. Conversely, during special events, such as the recent Ramadan, the CFD

can be packed with MSMEs selling their wares, and thousands of visitors can attend. Of the 600 registered MSMEs, 60% are in the food sector, 30% in the beverage sector, and 10% in other sectors." (Interview with CFD Committee, 2025).

According to the interview results, anyone can sell at the CFD at Merdeka Square in Medan City, provided they comply with existing regulations. The vendors' turnover and profits are recorded solely by the MSMEs themselves.



Source: CFD Committee, 2025

Figure 8. Number of Registered MSMEs

From the MSME side, researchers also interviewed regarding the concept of the layout of the place and the facilities available there. Car Free DayMedan City. Generally, traders in CFD say: "After the move, the sales area was also organized, making it more organized and eliminating the need to compete with other vendors for space. Previously, we were free to sell anywhere. Now, we vendors here are required to register and are registered by the CFD committee. For facilities, we only get a space; the rest is handled by the committee, specifically the arrangement of the space to avoid competition. Sunday morning, we arrived here to get our membership number and stall number so we could immediately move in and start selling. We brought our own tables and other equipment." (Interview with Trader, 2025).

From the results of the interview, it was shown that the MSME actors who sell in the area where the program is running *Car Free Day*(CFD) at Merdeka Square, Medan City, has been arranged in a way that can be said to be quite good, this can be seen from the distance between one trader and another, which is not too close and not too far apart.

#### **DISCUSSION**

# Economic Impact on MSMEs Through the Program Car Free Day(CFD) Medan City

Car Free Day(CFD) is a program that aims to encourage people to reduce the use of motorized vehicles. (Sucahyo et al., 2023). Program Car Free Day(CFD) is held on Sunday mornings from 6:00 to 10:00 a.m. WIB. Various activities are available during the CFD, such as cycling, gymnastics, jogging, and the presence of many MSMEs in the surrounding area. The large number

of MSMEs participating in the CFD program can encourage economic growth and improve the welfare of MSMEs. MSMEs can use the CFD as a platform to introduce their products, increase brand awareness, and build direct relationships with customers. (Hadisti et al., 2025) One of the human work activities to live in an Islamic economy is MSMEs, which applies to everyone regardless of their rank, position, or social status. (Atika, 2022).

The long-term process of improving a country's economic condition is called economic growth. This allows us to observe the dynamic aspects of economics, namely how the economy develops or changes over time. Using Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) data, regional economic growth is measured as a collaborative process between local governments and communities in exploring the potential of available natural resources. This process also involves collaboration with the private sector to create new jobs and stimulate local economic growth. (Nursidi & Wulandari, 2021).

The majority of MSMEs in Medan City are established by the Medan City Government. They participate in the CFD as part of an effort to boost the economy and foster new MSMEs. Researchers interviewed MSMEs regarding their reasons for participating in the Medan City CFD program. Generally, CFD vendors stated: "Initially I wanted to try selling here just for fun, but it turned out to be quite good because there were lots of buyers and I even became addicted to it as an additional income every week." (Interview with Trader, 2025).

According to observations made during the Program Car Free Day(CFD), MSMEs located at the Medan City CFD have been selling there for 1-2 years. And the MSMEs say they have been greatly impacted by the program. Car Free Day(CFD) at Merdeka Square, Medan City.



Source: Researcher Documentation, 2025

**Figure 9**. Interview with Trader

This is proven by the statement made by Mrs. Suriyati as a trader at CFD Medan City, she said: "The existence of CFD has had a significant impact on me and other MSMEs. Since the program launched, my income has increased significantly, from a mere percentage per day to a profit of up to IDR 2 million. And I've only been selling here for a year." (Interview with Trader, 2025).

According to the interviews, this program has significantly impacted the economic income of local residents and MSMEs from outside the area. Some MSMEs already have their own sales

locations or outlets, but to further maximize their revenue, they are also selling through the Medan City CFD program.

Prior to the data collection and relocation of their sales locations to their current locations, MSMEs reported being charged a weekly stall rental fee. Mr. Raki, a vendor at the Medan City CFD, stated: "Before we moved to our current location, we were charged Rp 10,000 to Rp 15,000 per week for stall rental, which covered management, cleaning, and security costs. However, this didn't affect our income here, as it was still affordable. Things are much better now. We've remapped our stalls, and the locations we sell are more organized. After we moved, we no longer have to pay for stall rental; we're only required to register and obtain a number to determine our sales location. Then, stall rental is free." (Interview with Trader, 2025).

Based on the findings from observations and interviews conducted by the researcher, it can be concluded that the city government has made efforts to improve the welfare of MSMEs in the Medan City CFD location. They strive to not charge any fees and make MSMEs as comfortable as possible while selling at the Medan City CFD. Program Car Free Day The CFD (Currently Available for Sale) around Medan's Merdeka Square area plays a significant role in increasing the income of MSMEs and boosting Medan's economy. Therefore, the findings of this study align with previous research. (Enre, 2020) where good financial performance indicates that a region has sufficient financial resources to finance the implementation of local autonomy.

# Challenges and Obstacles for MSMEs in the Program Car Free Day(CFD) Medan City

Apart from being beneficial for MSME actors, the program Car Free Day(CFD) also has challenges for business actors, these challenges are varied, such as:

#### a) Disruption of personal activities

What is meant by disruption of personal activities is the difficulties experienced by business actors themselves in transporting goods for sale to the CFD location because usually business actors carry out buying and selling activities alone.

#### b) Time constraints

Limited time limits the number of customers that can be served. MSMEs don't have enough time to attract more visitors or engage with potential customers. If customers arrive late or time runs out, MSMEs miss out on opportunities to sell their products, often resulting in large amounts of leftover merchandise and falling short of the business owner's sales target for the day.

#### c) Tight competition

One of the biggest challenges for MSMEs participating in the CFD program is intense competition. In areas typically filled with people walking or cycling, MSMEs have the opportunity to offer their products, but they also have to contend with the fact that many other vendors are doing the same. This creates intense competition among them, who must work hard to stand out from the crowd.

In an era of increasingly advanced technology, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) must be more creative. Therefore, MSMEs play a crucial role in boosting economic development and growth in Indonesia. (Dalimunthe et al., 2023) Marketing management must consider several factors because the marketing strategy must be appropriate and aligned with the product being sold. This is because the product must be acceptable to buyers. (Aisyah et al., 2024) In Surah Al-Araf, verse 10, Allah SWT states that He created humans on earth and provided a means of livelihood for them. This is linked to the concept of empowerment, as humans were created to strive. (Lubis et al., 2023). "Indeed, We have created you all on earth and provided a living for you there. You are very grateful." (QS. Al-A'raf:10).

There are various ways that MSME actors in CFD Medan City have done to overcome the challenges above, namely according to the results of interviews conducted by researchers, generally MSMEs said that: "Any business has its challenges, so we simply need to prepare ourselves. For example, by arriving at the CFD location early, we're ready to serve customers when they arrive. This automatically allows us to sell for a little longer, potentially attracting more customers. Furthermore, we face competition from the many MSMEs present by following market trends, selling items not commonly sold at CFD locations, setting more affordable prices, or even offering discounts like buy 2 get 1 free." (Interview with Trader, 2025).

Based on the interview, it can be concluded that the MSME actorsAt the Medan City CFD location, before choosing and deciding to sell in a busy location, they had already prepared and determined how to face competition among the many MSMEs present. Furthermore, they also hoped for support from the local government to continue providing strategic and comfortable sales locations, so they could reach more customers and continue their efforts to increase economic growth through MSMEs in Medan City.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The Car Free Day (CFD) program at Medan's Merdeka Square has proven to have a significant positive impact on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The CFD event, held every Sunday morning, provides MSMEs with the opportunity to showcase their products to the public who come to exercise or simply enjoy the atmosphere. The income of these microenterprises has increased significantly compared to normal days. This demonstrates that CFD is a strategic platform for supporting local economic growth while strengthening the position of MSMEs as the backbone of the local economy.

The Medan City Government has strived to create an ecosystem that supports the growth of MSMEs by streamlining sales locations, eliminating stall rental fees, and collecting data on MSMEs to identify their needs. These policies provide convenience for vendors, reduce the potential for conflict between vendors, and create a more orderly environment. However, the implementation of CFD is not without challenges, such as intense competition, limited sales time, and logistical constraints faced by businesses.

In addition to its economic impact, CFD also serves as a platform for social inclusion, strengthening interactions between the community and businesses. However, to maximize its benefits, synergy is required between the local government, MSMEs, and the community. Support in the form of promotion, facilities, and capacity building for micro-enterprises is essential for the program to be sustainable and contribute significantly to Medan's economic growth.

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