

Analysis of the Implementation of E-Marketing Strategies in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Medan City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of e-marketing strategies by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Medan, focusing on the food and beverage sector. The development of technology, particularly social media and other digital platforms, has provided opportunities for MSMEs to develop efficient and affordable marketing strategies. The research method employed in this study is descriptive qualitative, with primary data collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and direct observations, as well as secondary data obtained from the literature and official sources. The results show that the majority of MSME entrepreneurs in Medan have utilized social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, messaging applications such as WhatsApp, and online marketplaces such as Shopee to promote their products. The use of social media has proven to be effective in increasing product visibility at a lower cost than traditional marketing. However, some MSMEs are yet to optimize the use of marketplaces and food delivery applications because of the limited understanding of digital technology. The success of e-marketing implementation depends heavily on the technological readiness and capability of MSME entrepreneurs to leverage digital platforms. This study suggests the need to enhance digital literacy and provide technical training to MSME entrepreneurs to maximize the potential of digital marketing, thereby improving their competitiveness and marketing performance.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, E-marketing, MSMEs, Medan.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology requires business owners to quickly adapt to these changes. One form of technology that is widely utilized by the public is social media. Indonesia has the largest number of social media users worldwide. According to data from

WeAreSocial (Anggraeni, 2018), the number of active social media users in Indonesia reached 130 million, with a penetration rate of 49%, a 23% increase from the previous year. The most accessed social media platforms in Indonesia were YouTube (43%), Facebook (41%), WhatsApp (40%), and Instagram (38%). Given this trend, many Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have started to utilize social media in their marketing strategies. Previous studies have shown that social media can be effectively used to create value for customers (Oztamur and Karakadilar, 2014).

Indonesia is known to have a large number of MSMEs. According to data from the Cooperatives and MSME Agency, the number of MSME entrepreneurs in Indonesia was recorded at 59.69 million, contributing 62.57% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016 (industri.bisnis.com, 2018). MSMEs also play an important role in driving national economic growth, especially in terms of contributing to Gross National Income (GNI), employment absorption, and innovation development (Davis, Hills, & LaForge, 1985). Marketing is a crucial aspect of business development. An appropriate marketing strategy allows entrepreneurs to determine segmentation, target markets, and market positioning more accurately. The use of social media and websites opens up wide opportunities for MSMEs to expand their markets, especially because of low entry barriers to digital platforms.

However, there are gaps in the literature and practices related to e-marketing strategies in MSMEs, especially Medan. Research shows that many microbusiness owners face difficulties in adopting digital marketing strategies due to limited human resources, financial constraints, and a lack of understanding regarding the benefits of e-marketing (Nikunen et al., 2017; Napitupulu et al., 2018). Chikerema and Makanyeza (2021) also emphasize that resource limitations are a major barrier to MSMEs achieving optimal market orientation. Furthermore, most previous studies have focused on small- and medium-sized enterprises, while micro-enterprises, which are dominant in number, often do not receive special attention. Gherhes et al. (2016) and Bordonaba-Juste et al. (2012) note that micro-enterprises have different characteristics and challenges compared to small and medium-sized enterprises, thus requiring a more specific strategic approach. Adebisi and Bakare (2019) also highlighted the importance of transitioning from general marketing strategies to approaches tailored to the capacities and needs of each type of business. In addition, the relationship between the use of information technology and the performance of MSME organizations has not been widely studied, especially in local contexts, such as Medan. Yunis et al. (2017) mentioned that the lack of integration of digital technology can hinder business growth and competitiveness, making it crucial to explore the role of e-marketing in improving MSME performance.

Medan, an economic growth center in Indonesia, has a growing number of MSMEs, particularly in the food and beverage sectors. Intense competition in this sector demands that business owners develop relevant and effective digital marketing strategies. However, to date, there has been a lack of empirical research specifically examining the implementation of e-marketing strategies by MSMEs in Medan and the barriers they face in their implementation. Therefore, this study analyzes the e-marketing strategies implemented by MSME entrepreneurs in Medan and identifies the challenges they encounter when implementing these strategies.

Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is a comprehensive plan designed by a company to achieve specific marketing objectives through market analysis, identification of target consumers, and the effective and efficient utilization of resources. According to Andrews and Manap (2016), strategy is a pattern of decisions within a company that sets and explains goals, intentions, and major plans to achieve them. Meanwhile, Chandler in Khotijah (2004) adds that strategy includes the company's long-term goals, chosen course of action, and allocation of resources required to achieve these objectives. Therefore, strategy serves as a primary tool for a company to achieve success and sustain its operations.

In the marketing domain, this strategy includes a series of steps aimed at meeting consumers' needs and desires. Kotler (2009) stated that marketing is the process of identifying and fulfilling consumer needs by creating value. Marketing is not just about selling products; it involves a series of processes including market research, product development, pricing, distribution, and promotion. Stanton (2005) defines marketing as a total system of business activities designed to plan, price, promote, and distribute products or services to satisfy consumer wants both now and in the future. Therefore, marketing has a broad scope and is an integral part of business strategy.

Kasemsap (2015), marketing strategies play a critical role in optimizing resource allocation and improving organizational performance. This aligns with the views of Supriyono et al. (2022) and Smith (2003), who emphasize that marketing strategies must be based on a comprehensive analysis of the market and target consumers. Furthermore, these strategies must reflect a value proposition that is competitive and sufficiently compelling to attract customer interest and loyalty. Pandya, Chhabra, and Kumar (2023) also added that in certain industries, such as sustainability-based industries, marketing strategies must align with customer operational needs while considering economic, social, and environmental factors.

Marketing strategies are generally developed based on four main elements of the marketing mix: product, price, distribution, and promotion. A product is anything that can be offered to consumers for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption to satisfy their needs and desires. Kotler and Keller (2007) classify products into three types: nondurable goods, durable goods, and services. Price is the exchange value set for a product or service, reflecting not only production costs, but also demand conditions, purchasing power, and market competition. Distribution involves all activities aimed at delivering the product from the producer to the final consumer, including market area selection and the type of distribution channel used. Promotion is a communication process designed to introduce, influence, and persuade consumers to become interested in products offered through various media such as advertisements, sales promotions, and digital media.

Marketing strategies are crucial for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs, which generally have limited resources, need to devise marketing strategies that are efficient, targeted, and adaptable to market dynamics. By applying effective marketing strategies, MSMEs can better understand consumer needs, increase competitiveness, and expand market reach, especially by leveraging rapidly developing digital technology.

E-Marketing

E-marketing or electronic marketing refers to the application of marketing principles using digital technology, specifically the Internet, to promote and distribute products or services more effectively and efficiently to consumers. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2004:74), e-marketing is the marketing side of e-commerce, encompassing a company's activities in communicating, promoting, and selling products or services through the internet. Similarly, Boone and Kurtz (2005) state that e-marketing is a component of e-commerce that focuses on marketing strategies, including production planning, distribution, promotion, and pricing of products or services through Internet platforms using digital devices. Strauss and Frost (2001) also emphasize that e-marketing involves the use of data and electronic applications to design and implement marketing strategies aimed at creating mutually beneficial exchanges between consumers and organizations.

E-marketing involves various digital strategies and tools such as email marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and web-based advertising. In addition, Sujinny et al. Aziz et al.(2024), Aziz et al. (2022), and Sugiharto (2024) state that e-marketing enables businesses to reach a wider audience directly and apply marketing approaches that are more personalized and tailored to consumer behavior and preferences. Additionally, e-marketing offers significant advantages, such as the ability to reach consumers in areas not yet penetrated by competitors, cost-efficiency through fast

electronic transactions, such as sending emails or digital data to consumers, streamlining distribution channels from producers directly to consumers, and the ability to quickly and accurately adjust products and sales strategies.

Implementing e-marketing strategies is essential for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to improve performance and competitiveness in a dynamic business environment. Mas'ud et al. (2022) show that MSMEs with better technological capabilities tend to be more effective in utilizing e-business, resulting in positive impacts on marketing performance. This underscores the importance of technological readiness in supporting e-marketing strategies' success. Rachmawati (2024) also mentioned that digital marketing helps MSMEs promote their products more widely, increase access to larger markets, and strengthen customer engagement. In the face of growing competition, MSMEs are required to adopt e-marketing strategies that align with market conditions and the challenges that they face (Hardilawati et al., 2023; Hafsaawati, 2022).

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (UMKM)

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (UMKM) are businesses that are owned individually or operate on a small scale, classified based on certain criteria such as the number of employees, annual revenue, and capital size. These criteria vary by country and are adjusted according to the economic conditions and national development needs. In India, the UMKM is classified based on the size of investments in equipment and machinery, with clear value limits for determining whether a business is categorized as micro, small, or medium (Kumar et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the UMKM classification is based on business revenue and the number of employees, emphasizing the important role of UMKM as drivers of economic growth and job creation (Mugiati, 2024; Khakim & Firmansyah, 2023).

The UMKM plays a crucial role in strengthening national economic structure. Their contributions are not only visible through the large number of business units, but also in their ability to create jobs, expand entrepreneurial opportunities, and strengthen community economic independence. Rafiuddin et al. (2024) stated that UMKM supports economic growth through entrepreneurship development, innovation enhancement, and contributions to the competitiveness of industrial sectors.

The existence of the UMKM also directly impacts the strengthening of the local economy. By providing jobs in the region, the UMKM helps equalize growth and reduce regional disparities. Kadaba et al. (2022) and Hidayat & Nurcahyo (n.d.) emphasized that UMKM serves a dual function, acting as both a business activity driver and a social-economic pillar that strengthens local community resilience.

The development of UMKM highly depends on a supportive business environment, appropriate use of technology, and strategic partnerships with various stakeholders. Supriyati et al. (2023) highlighted that the synergy between UMKM actors, higher education institutions, and the government is critical in boosting business capacity and the competitiveness of UMKM in an increasingly dynamic market competition.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Descriptive methods were used to systematically describe the e-marketing strategies implemented by UMKM actors in Medan. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and produce a comprehensive and contextual explanation. The qualitative process is conducted intensively, where the researcher directly participates in the field, records various ongoing events, analyzes documents found, and compiles reports based on findings (Sugiyono, 2011).

This research was conducted over eight months, with Medan City selected as the research location because of the large number of UMKM actors and their relevance to the focus of the study. Data were collected using a combination of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with UMKM actors and key informants, who were considered to have knowledge of the issue. Additionally, direct field observations were conducted to strengthen the data. Secondary data were collected through literature studies, books, documents, and official sources from related institutions, such as the Medan City Government Office.

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with the data collection process (ongoing analysis), using a qualitative approach. The analysis involved three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction aims to sort and organize the data based on relevance, eliminate unnecessary information, and focus on the analysis. The reduced data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate the analysis and draw conclusions. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the processed data to obtain valid findings that can be scientifically justified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Location Description

Medan City is the capital of North Sumatra Province and the third-largest metropolitan city in Indonesia, after Jakarta and Surabaya. As the third-largest city in Indonesia, Medan serves as an economic and trade center on Sumatra Island. The city is bordered by the Deli Serdang Regency to the east, south, west, and north, respectively.

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Medan consists of 21 districts, including Medan Tuntungan, Medan Johor, Medan Amplas, Medan Denai, Medan Area, Medan Kota, Medan Maimun, Medan Baru, Medan Polonia, Medan Selayang, Medan Sunggal, Medan Helvetia, Medan Petisah, Medan Barat, Medan Timur, Medan Perjuangan, Medan Tembung, Medan Deli, Medan Labuhan, Medan Marelan, and Medan Belawan. According to Disdukcapil data in 2020, Medan City has a population of approximately 2,435,252 people, with a population density of 9,522.22 people per km². The subjects of this study were UMKM actors in the food and beverage sector in Medan City.

The Role of E-Marketing for UMKM

This study shows that technological development, particularly on the Internet and social media, has encouraged UMKM actors in Medan to adopt digital marketing strategies or e-marketing in their business activities. Based on in-depth interviews with UMKM actors, most have utilized various digital platforms, such as social media (Facebook, Instagram), messaging apps (WhatsApp, Gmail), and marketplaces (Shopee, Tokopedia) to promote their products. This finding indicates that UMKM actors not only rely on traditional marketing, but are also actively exploring digital marketing to expand their market reach.

Most of the UMKM actors interviewed revealed that they regularly posted product photos on social media to attract the attention of potential customers. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, are effective tools for building brand awareness and directly communicating with customers. This aligns with the literature, which states that social media serves as an effective communication channel for building relationships between businesses and customers. Armstrong and Kotler (2004) argue that e-marketing, which includes the use of digital platforms for promotion and product distribution, allows companies to access broader markets at a lower cost than traditional marketing.

Furthermore, the use of marketplaces, such as Shopee and Tokopedia, also supports UMKM actors in expanding their market reach. These marketplace platforms provide UMKM with direct access to larger and more segmented markets. This finding supports the argument of Boone and Kurtz (2005), who stated that e-marketing allows more efficient product distribution and creates opportunities for UMKM actors to reach customers previously unreachable by traditional distribution methods.

One key finding of this study was the use of promotional budgets by UMKM actors to support their marketing activities. Research informants revealed that they allocate between IDR 100,000 and IDR 300,000 per month to promote products through social media and maintain Internet connectivity. This finding suggests that even though UMKM digital marketing budgets are limited, they recognize the importance of their presence on digital platforms in increasing product visibility. This aligns with the research conducted by

Sugiharto (2024), who stated that e-marketing allows significant cost efficiency for UMKM in reaching broader markets compared to traditional marketing, which requires high costs for physical distribution and promotion.

This study also found that the success of e-marketing implementation highly depends on the technological readiness of the UMKM actors. Those with better access to and skills in using digital technology tend to be more effective in utilizing the potential of e-marketing. Mas'ud et al. (2022) stated that UMKM with better technological capabilities are more likely to adapt to e-marketing, which, in turn, can improve their marketing performance. This is reflected in the fact that many UMKM actors in Medan have optimized devices, such as smartphones and messaging apps, to manage communication with customers more effectively.

E-marketing also has a positive impact on the competitiveness of the UMKM actors in Medan. Utilizing digital platforms, UMKM actors can quickly adapt to changing market trends, introduce their products to a wider market, and build stronger relationships with customers. Rachmawati (2024) emphasized that digital marketing provides UMKM with opportunities to expand its market and strengthen customer engagement, which can ultimately enhance its marketing performance. This finding is consistent with research showing that e-marketing can improve UMKM competitiveness, especially in increasingly competitive markets.

The Impact of Social Media Usage

The use of social media has proven to be an effective marketing strategy for UMKM actors in Medan. Based on interviews with 10 UMKM actors, all informants actively used social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, to market their products. These platforms are chosen because they are easily accessible, widely known, and allow business owners to visually showcase their products in an engaging manner. Social media also facilitates direct communication between business owners and customers. This finding is in line with Kotler's (2009) view that marketing not only involves promotion but also an ongoing communication process to create value for customers.

WhatsApp, particularly WhatsApp Business, also serves as a primary communication tool between the UMKM actors and customers. Seven out of ten informants use this app to provide product information and respond to customer inquiries quickly and directly. The catalog and customer group features of WhatsApp Business support more personalized communication, aligning with the principles of e-marketing described by Boone and Kurtz (2005), which emphasizes building strong relationships between businesses and customers.

However, only four out of ten UMKM actors utilize marketplaces, such as Shopee and Tokopedia, as well as food delivery services, such as Go-Food and Grab-Food. This shows that while the potential of digital marketing is vast, not all UMKM actors optimize their use. A limited understanding of technology and preference for more conventional marketing methods are the main obstacles. As reported by Mas et al. (2022), the UMKM, which can optimally utilize digital technology, tends to perform better in marketing.

Additionally, some UMKM actors use digital banking apps to ease payment transactions. They also routinely update their content on social media to ensure that their products remain visible and relevant to consumers. This strategy supports the view of Supriyono et al. (2022), who argue that marketing strategies must consider consumer behavior and maintain consistency in promotional communication.

Thus, social media is not only a promotional tool but also an essential component in the digital marketing strategy of UMKM. This finding suggests that the use of social media by the UMKM in Medan has positively impacted market expansion, increased interaction with customers, and improved promotional cost efficiency.

CONCLUSION

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that UMKM actors in Medan have started using e-marketing strategies to market their products, communicate with customers, and expand their markets. They use social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as well as messaging apps such as WhatsApp to promote products. Social media has proven to be effective in increasing product visibility at a lower cost than traditional marketing. However, many UMKM actors are still limited in their use of other digital applications, such as marketplaces and food delivery services, owing to a lack of understanding of technology and its applications. The success of e-marketing implementation highly depends on the extent to which UMKM actors master technology. UMKM, which is more skilled in using technology, tends to better utilize e-marketing and improve competitiveness and marketing performance.

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