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Digital Marketing Strategy Analysis In Enhancing MSME Competitiveness Using A Descriptive-Qualitative Approach In The Era Of Digital Business Transformation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze digital marketing strategies that can enhance the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the era of digital business transformation. The method used is descriptive-qualitative, based on a literature study of relevant journals and books on digital marketing and MSME development. The results show that the use of social media, e-commerce, and creative content plays a significant role in expanding market reach, increasing sales, and building brand awareness more efficiently than conventional methods. This study affirms that the success of digital marketing in MSMEs depends not only on technology but also on human resource readiness, digital literacy, and adequate ecosystem support. In addition, this study offers novelty by emphasizing the importance of integrating innovation and the use of digital data as a sustainable strategy for enhancing MSME competitiveness amid global competition.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; MSMEs; Innovation; Competitiveness; Digital Transformation; Business Ecosystem.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has brought fundamental changes to the way business activities are conducted, particularly in marketing, consumer communication, and market development. Through advances in information and communication technology, digital media have been used by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as a means of introducing products, delivering information, and building relationships with customers.

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Amid increasingly dynamic business competition, the use of *digital marketing* has become one of the strategies for expanding marketing reach and strengthening business competitiveness. Chaffey (2023) explains that the digital marketing framework can be positioned as part of the competitive strategy used by MSMEs in facing the evolving digital business environment.

MSMEs play an important role in economic activity by providing a variety of products and services and by creating employment for the community. However, in developing their marketing activities, MSME actors still face various challenges, especially when competing with businesses that have greater capital resources and technological capabilities. Limited knowledge of digital technology, limited ability to manage content, and limited use of online marketing channels can prevent marketing activities from running optimally. Fitriani and Yusuf (2023) explain that *digital marketing* is associated with increased MSME sales. This indicates that digital marketing management needs attention as an effort to support business development, even though its implementation must be adapted to the capacity and needs of each MSME actor.

As it has developed, *digital marketing* is understood not merely as promoting products through the internet but also as encompassing marketing communication planning, the use of technology, information management, and an understanding of consumer behavior. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) explain that the development of marketing has been supported by the use of technology to strengthen the relationship between companies and customers. In MSME activities, digital technology can be used through social media, *marketplaces*, websites, and various online communication channels. The choice of channels needs to be adjusted to the characteristics of the product, the target consumers, and the capabilities of the business actor so that marketing activities can be carried out effectively.

Lestari (2022) explains that *digital marketing* strategies can be used in MSME development in the Industry 4.0 era. This discussion relates to the need for business actors to adapt to changes in the business environment and technological developments. In addition, innovation also needs attention in implementing digital marketing. Wulandari (2021) explains that digital innovation plays a role in supporting improvements in MSME business performance. Thus, the use of digital technology must be accompanied by creativity in presenting content, updating promotional strategies, and adjusting products to consumer needs. Without continuous planning and innovation, the use of digital media risks becoming merely routine promotion without evaluation of the results achieved.

Besides internal factors such as human resource capability and the creativity of business actors, the success of digital marketing is also influenced by MSMEs' ability to manage customer relationships and use digital platforms consistently. Prabowo (2023) explains that the implementation of *e-marketing* can be used to support the improvement

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of MSME competitiveness. In its implementation, business actors need to pay attention to the quality of product information, communication consistency, service speed, and ease of transaction. Ramadhani (2024) explains that social media can be optimized to increase MSME *brand awareness*. This shows that digital marketing is directed not only at introducing products but can also be used to build brand recognition and strengthen the relationship between business actors and customers.

Nevertheless, improved competitiveness cannot be guaranteed solely through the use of digital media. MSME actors still need to understand consumer characteristics, select appropriate marketing channels, and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies applied. Rahayu (2024) discusses business administration in the context of digital transformation, relating to the importance of adjusting business management to technological developments. Therefore, the implementation of *digital marketing* needs to be positioned as part of comprehensive business management and not limited to promotional activities. The integration of technology utilization, innovation, business management, and customer service needs attention in efforts to strengthen the position of MSMEs amid business competition.

Based on the above description, the problem examined in this study concerns the use of *digital marketing* strategies to enhance MSME competitiveness in the era of digital business transformation. Attention is also given to various factors that influence the effectiveness of digital marketing, including limited human resource capability, creativity in content presentation, use of digital platforms, and the need to carry out innovation continuously.

The research gap in this study lies in the need for a discussion that links the use of digital media with MSMEs' internal capability to manage marketing strategies in a directed manner. Discussions of increased sales, brand recognition, and technology use need to be linked to aspects of innovation planning and marketing evaluation so that a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of *digital marketing* to business competitiveness can be obtained.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze *digital marketing* strategies for enhancing MSME competitiveness through a descriptive-qualitative approach.

Objectives

Specifically, this study focuses on three aspects:

1. The role of *digital marketing* in supporting increased sales and *brand awareness* among MSMEs;
2. The internal and external factors that influence the effectiveness of digital marketing strategy implementation; and

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3. The role of innovation, technology utilization, and digital collaboration in strengthening MSME competitiveness.

Through this study, it is expected that an understanding of the implementation of digital marketing strategies appropriate to the conditions and needs of MSMEs in the era of digital business transformation can be obtained.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive-qualitative approach with a literature study method. This approach was chosen because the research is directed at analyzing *digital marketing* strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the era of digital business transformation through a review of various relevant scholarly sources. No interviews or direct observations of MSME actors were conducted in this study. The review focuses on concepts, previous research findings, and scholarly discussions related to digital marketing, innovation, digital literacy, and business development. Through the literature study, relationships among concepts can be identified and various research results can be compared to obtain a systematic understanding of digital marketing strategies in MSMEs (Chaffey, 2023).

1. Type and Source of Data

The data used in this study are secondary data obtained through a literature study. The data sources are scholarly journal articles and books discussing digital marketing, business strategy, social media use, digital innovation, and the improvement of MSME competitiveness. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research focus and its contribution to explaining the application of *digital marketing* in business activities.

The literature used in this study includes the research of Fitriani and Yusuf on the effect of digital marketing on increased MSME sales, the research of Lestari on digital marketing strategies in the Industry 4.0 era, and the research of Wulandari on the role of digital innovation in improving MSME business performance. In addition, Prabowo's discussion of *e-marketing* implementation and Ramadhani's research on optimizing social media to increase *brand awareness* were used as supporting material in the analysis of digital marketing strategies (Fitriani & Yusuf, 2023; Lestari, 2022; Wulandari, 2021; Prabowo, 2023; Ramadhani, 2024).

Conceptual literature was also used to strengthen the foundation of the analysis, particularly regarding technology-based marketing development and digital business transformation. The book *Marketing 5.0: Technology for Humanity* by Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan was used as a basis for understanding the relationship between technology and marketing activities (Kotler et al., 2021). All of these sources were reviewed for their relevance to the research objectives so that the information obtained could be used to

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explain digital marketing strategies and the various factors that influence their implementation in MSMEs.

2. Data Collection Technique

Data collection was carried out through documentation study and literature searching. The process involved identifying relevant scholarly sources, reading the content of the sources, recording important information, and grouping the information according to the research focus. The literature reviewed covers discussions of social media use, content creativity, digital literacy, the use of online marketing platforms, innovation, and business ecosystem support.

Information from each source was recorded based on the reference identity, the main subject of discussion, the research approach of the earlier study, and the findings related to the research problem. The information was then grouped into themes in line with the research objectives. Through this grouping, similarities, differences, and relationships among the findings from various sources could be compared without treating the results of earlier studies as field data obtained directly.

Literature on MSME development and digital marketing was used to identify the various forms of strategy that business actors can apply. Meanwhile, sources discussing innovation and digital transformation were used to explain the supporting factors and obstacles in implementing these strategies. Thus, data collection was directed not only at recording definitions but also at examining the relationship between digital marketing strategies and the improvement of MSME competitiveness.

3. Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using the descriptive-qualitative method through the processes of reading, grouping, comparing, and interpreting the information obtained from the literature. The analysis was directed at finding recurring patterns of discussion, identifying differences in views among sources, and explaining the relationship between *digital marketing* strategies and MSME competitiveness.

The first stage was data reduction, namely selecting information that matched the research focus and setting aside information not directly related to the problem formulation. The second stage was data grouping, namely arranging the information into main themes covering social media use, content creativity, digital literacy, the use of marketing technology, innovation, and business ecosystem support. The third stage was data display, namely describing the results of the literature review systematically according to the themes that had been determined. The final stage was drawing conclusions, namely formulating an interpretation of the contribution of digital marketing strategies to MSME competitiveness based on the interrelationship of findings from the various sources reviewed. This process of organizing and interpreting information was

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aligned with the principles of qualitative data analysis described by Miles and Huberman (2014).

4. Validity Checking of Information

The validity of the information was checked by comparing various literature sources. Information on a given theme was not immediately used as the basis for drawing conclusions before being compared with other relevant sources. This comparison was carried out to determine the consistency of the discussion, identify differences in earlier research results, and avoid drawing conclusions based on a single source.

The consistency between the information cited and the discussion in the original source was also considered in this study. Every finding derived from earlier research is treated as a result reported by the authors of that source and not as the result of direct measurement in this study. Accordingly, statements about increased sales, promotional effectiveness, or changes in MSME performance can be made only insofar as they are supported by the literature reviewed.

Through these stages, this study is expected to produce a systematic account of *digital marketing* strategies for enhancing MSME competitiveness. The use of a literature study also makes it possible to identify the various factors that need attention in implementing digital marketing while explaining the limitations of such strategies based on the available scholarly findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aims to analyze *digital marketing* strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the era of digital business transformation. The results were obtained through a review of various scholarly literature discussing digital marketing, social media use, content creativity, digital capability, innovation, and business performance. The analysis was carried out by comparing the ideas and results of earlier studies to identify strategies relevant to MSME development. Therefore, the results presented are a synthesis of the literature and do not derive from interviews or direct measurement of MSME actors.

Based on the literature review, several main themes were found that explain the role of digital marketing in supporting MSME competitiveness. These themes include the use of social media to expand the market, content development to build brand recognition, improvement of digital capability, integration of marketing channels, and evaluation of marketing performance. Recent literature also shows that marketing strategies need to be integrated with digital capability and an orientation toward consumer needs (Safitri, Audiah, & Edmond, 2026).

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1. Use of Social Media as a Promotional Tool

Social media is one of the channels that MSMEs can use to introduce products, deliver information, and build communication with customers. Through social media, business information can be disseminated more widely without having to rely entirely on conventional promotional activities. However, each platform has different characteristics, so its selection needs to be adjusted to the type of product and the target consumer group.

The literature review shows that the effectiveness of social media is determined not only by the existence of a business account but also by content consistency, the relevance of the information, and the ability to build interaction with consumers. Research on determining the priority of digital marketing media for MSMEs in Indonesia shows that market reach, performance measurability, cost efficiency, interactivity, and ease of implementation are among the important criteria in selecting marketing channels (Worldailmi & Afraah, 2026).

Thus, the selection of social media needs to be based on its strategic benefits for the business. Visual content can be used to introduce products, while video can be used to explain the production process. Communication features can also be used to answer customer questions. Through purposeful use of social media, feedback from consumers can be obtained and used as material for improving products and services.

2. Content Creativity and the Formation of Brand Awareness

Content creativity is an important aspect of digital marketing because consumers are exposed to a great deal of information and promotion across many platforms. A product is easier to recognize when the content presented has a distinctive character and conveys information clearly and in line with consumer needs. Such content can take the form of product photos, short videos, explanations of product benefits, stories about the production process, and information about the values or uniqueness of the business.

Besides attracting attention, content can also be used to shape consumers' perception of a brand. Brand recognition can be strengthened through the consistent use of visual identity, communication style, and product information. Even so, attractive content still needs to be supported by accurate information and product quality that matches the promotional claims.

Studies of digital marketing strategies and consumer engagement in MSMEs show a shift from one-way promotion toward communication that is more interactive and oriented toward customer relationships. Consumer engagement can act as a link between digital marketing activities, brand loyalty, and market expansion (Wahyudi et al., 2026). Therefore, content creativity needs to be directed not only at obtaining high view counts but also at building communication, trust, and long-term relationships with customers.

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3. Digital Literacy and Human Resource Capacity

Implementing digital marketing requires MSME actors to be able to manage platforms, create content, understand consumer characteristics, and evaluate promotional results. Limitations in these abilities can cause technology use to be confined to uploading information without adequate planning and measurement.

In marketing activities, digital literacy includes the ability to use platform features, read interaction data, understand customer needs, maintain account security, and determine strategies appropriate to the capacity of the business. In addition, MSME actors need to understand the difference between indicators of digital activity and indicators of business performance. The number of followers, views, and likes can be used to describe consumer response to content but does not necessarily indicate an increase in sales or profit.

Recent research on digital marketing strategy and MSME competitiveness shows that digital capability plays a role in strengthening the effect of marketing strategy on business competitiveness (Safitri et al., 2026). This finding indicates that technology use needs to be accompanied by the development of skills and business management capability. Basic skills such as drawing up a content calendar, updating product information, responding to consumer inquiries, and periodically recording promotional results can be started by MSME actors.

Human resource capacity building also needs to be adjusted to business conditions. A complex marketing system is not always needed by MSMEs with limited capital and workforce. As a first step, digital marketing capability can be developed through the consistent application of simple strategies accompanied by evaluation and improvement.

4. Integration of Social Media, E-Commerce, and Sales Channels

Social media can be integrated with *e-commerce* or *marketplaces* to connect promotional activities with the transaction process. Social media can be used to introduce products and build interaction with consumers, while a *marketplace* can be used to make it easier for consumers to view product options, obtain price information, and place orders. Through such integration, the marketing flow can be arranged in a more directed way, from product introduction to the purchase process.

Nevertheless, using several platforms at the same time does not necessarily produce effective results if they are not managed well. Business actors need to maintain consistent information about product names, prices, photos, stock availability, and ordering terms. Inconsistent information across channels can confuse consumers and reduce trust in the business.

The integration of digital marketing also needs to be adjusted to the business actor's ability to manage orders, inventory, and customer service. Increased consumer

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attention generated by promotional activities needs to be followed by the ability to fulfill demand on time. Therefore, digital marketing strategy needs to be connected to operational management so that increased promotional activity does not create new obstacles in the service process.

5. Innovation and the Use of Data in Decision-Making

Innovation is needed so that digital marketing strategies can be adapted to changes in consumer behavior and developments in competition. Innovation is not always carried out through expensive or complex technology. At the MSME level, innovation can be applied through developing content variations, updating product presentation, improving service, using appropriate digital features, and adjusting strategies based on customer feedback.

The use of data can help business actors determine the success of the strategies they have applied. Data that can be used in evaluation include content reach, consumer interaction, visits to product pages, number of inquiries, number of orders, repeat purchases, and promotional costs. This information needs to be analyzed periodically so that strategies that merely increase consumer attention can be distinguished from strategies that support business results.

Research on digital marketing strategies for improving MSME competitiveness shows the importance of coherence among strategy, digital capability, and consumer orientation (Ade et al., 2026). Thus, marketing decisions should not be based solely on platform trends but should also consider performance data, consumer needs, business capability, and long-term business goals.

6. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Digital Marketing Implementation

The success of digital marketing is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include human resource capability, creativity, product quality, capital availability, and the ability to manage marketing activities. Meanwhile, external factors include technological developments, consumer characteristics, competition, training support, internet access, and policies that support MSME development.

Budget limitations can make it difficult for business actors to use paid advertising on a sustained basis. In addition, low digital capability can hinder the use of analytics features and the evaluation of promotions. On the other hand, changes in platform algorithms and content competition require marketing strategies to be adjusted continuously.

Support from the government, business communities, and platform providers can be provided to reduce these obstacles through training, mentoring, and the provision of information that is easy to understand. However, the benefits of external support will be more optimal if it is adapted to the real needs of MSME actors and can be applied in day-

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to-day operations. Therefore, strengthening digital marketing needs to be carried out by improving internal capability and developing a supportive business environment.

DISCUSSION

1. Digital Marketing Strategy as an Instrument for Improving Competitiveness

Based on the synthesis of the literature, digital marketing can be understood as part of the business strategy used to expand market access, introduce products, build relationships with customers, and adapt the business to changes in the business environment. The role of digital marketing is not limited to disseminating information through the internet but also includes communication management, content development, data utilization, and evaluation of marketing results.

The study by Safitri, Audiah, and Edmond (2026) shows that digital marketing strategy has a positive effect on MSME competitiveness. This relationship is also reinforced by the digital capability possessed by business actors. This finding shows that the use of technology alone is not sufficient to produce competitive advantage. The use of technology needs to be accompanied by planning skills and the ability of business actors to turn digital information into a basis for business decision-making.

In the MSME context, competitiveness can be seen in a business's ability to reach consumers more widely, deliver appropriate product value, retain customers, and adjust strategy when the market changes. Digital marketing can support the achievement of these goals, but the results are still influenced by product quality, price, service, and operational capacity. Thus, digital marketing needs to be positioned as one part of a broader business strategy.

2. The Relationship between Social Media and Consumer Engagement

Through social media, two-way communication between MSMEs and consumers can be built. Unlike one-way promotion that merely conveys information from seller to buyer, social media gives consumers the opportunity to respond, ask questions, share experiences, and spread information about products. This interaction can be used as a source of information for understanding market needs.

However, consumer engagement needs to be managed consistently. Consumer trust can decline when responses are slow, the information given is incomplete, or promotional content does not match the actual condition of the product. Therefore, social media activity needs to be supported by good service and the ability to meet customer needs.

The study by Prakoso and Sriminarti (2026) on social media marketing strategies in Indonesian MSMEs shows that content consistency, customer engagement, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial orientation are aspects related to marketing performance. This finding indicates that the benefits of social media can be obtained more optimally

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when its use is directed toward building relationships with customers and not merely used as a place to display a product catalog.

3. Content Creativity as a Differentiator in Competition

In the digital environment, consumers can compare various products within a short time. This condition requires MSMEs to develop content that can show the uniqueness of a product and the reasons why it deserves consideration by consumers. Content creativity can be used to build differentiation, especially for businesses that offer products similar to those of competitors.

Effective content needs to be prepared with attention to visual appeal, clarity of information, and suitability to consumer needs. A product's appearance can be shown through photos, while the process of using or making it can be explained through video. Meanwhile, the values and characteristics of the business can be conveyed through narrative. The choice of content format needs to be adjusted to the communication goals and the business actor's ability to produce content consistently.

Although creativity is needed, content popularity should not be the only goal that MSME actors aim to achieve. A high number of views is not necessarily followed by an increase in transactions. Therefore, the results of content presentation need to be evaluated based on consumer response and relevant business indicators. Through this approach, creativity can be developed to support business goals and not merely directed at following trends.

4. Integration of Digital Marketing Strategy

Digital marketing strategy needs to be implemented in an integrated way so that the promotional activities carried out by MSMEs not only increase marketing activity but also support competitive advantage. Integration can be achieved by using social media to build brand awareness, using *marketplaces* to expand sales channels, and using instant messaging services to maintain communication with consumers. In selecting digital media, several aspects need attention, including market reach, cost efficiency, interaction with consumers, and ease of measuring marketing results. The study by Worldailmi and Afraah (2026) shows that social media is one of the digital marketing media prioritized by MSMEs. In addition, search engine optimization (SEO) and digital content marketing are also options in marketing activities.

5. Measuring the Effectiveness of Digital Marketing

The effectiveness of digital marketing cannot be assessed merely by the number of followers or the amount of content that has been uploaded. Evaluation needs to be carried out on indicators directly related to marketing objectives, such as content reach, level of interaction, number of inquiries from prospective buyers, sales conversion, and repeat purchases. Through such evaluation, the media that deliver the best results can be identified and subsequent improvements to the strategy can be determined. The study

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by Nurofik et al. (2026) examines the relationship between digital marketing, competitiveness, and marketing performance in food industry MSMEs. Its results show that marketing needs to be managed strategically so that the use of digital media can deliver more optimal business results.

6. Ecosystem Support in Improving MSME Competitiveness

The success of digital marketing is also influenced by human resource readiness, the ability to use technology, and the support of the business environment. MSME actors need to be given access to digital marketing training, business management mentoring, and information on the use of technology suited to business needs. Such support is needed so that digital transformation does not stop at creating social media accounts but can be developed into planned and sustainable marketing activities. The study by Septiyanti, Rosiana, and Maryono (2026) shows that business innovation, partnerships, participation in business associations, and government assistance are among the factors related to the implementation of digital marketing in food-sector micro and small enterprises in Indonesia.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study uses a literature study method, so the results obtained depend on the scope, quality, and relevance of the sources reviewed. No interviews or direct observations of MSME actors were conducted in this study. Therefore, the results of the discussion cannot be used to describe the specific conditions of a particular business or to determine the magnitude of the sales increase caused by the implementation of digital marketing.

In addition, the results of implementing *digital marketing* strategies can differ because they are influenced by business sector, consumer characteristics, resource capacity, and regional conditions. In subsequent research, the study could be expanded by using more detailed literature search and selection procedures or by combining a literature study with field research supported by adequate data documentation.

Overall, the results show that digital marketing has the potential to support the improvement of MSME competitiveness when it is applied in a planned, consistent manner that fits the capacity of the business. The use of social media, content creativity, digital literacy, integration of marketing channels, data-based evaluation, and ecosystem support should be viewed as mutually complementary elements in the development of digital business.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that digital marketing strategy is an important factor in enhancing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the era of digital business transformation. The findings from the literature show that the use of social

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media, marketplaces, and digital technology can expand market reach, increase interaction with consumers, and encourage MSME sales growth. In addition, digital literacy, content creativity, and external support are components that strengthen the success of digital marketing implementation.

Based on the analysis, there are four main components that must be considered for a digital marketing strategy to run effectively, namely:

1. Strategic use of digital media;
2. Creativity in content presentation;
3. Improvement of digital literacy and human resource capacity; and
4. Cross-sector collaboration among MSMEs, the government, and digital platforms.

The contribution of this study is to provide a comprehensive picture of how a combination of content creativity, technological capability, and digital ecosystem support can be used as a strategic framework for MSMEs to enhance competitiveness sustainably. This study also provides an understanding of the internal and external factors that need to be strengthened so that digital marketing can be applied optimally by MSMEs with their various limitations.

So that digital marketing strategy can be implemented more optimally, several operational recommendations that can be carried out are as follows:

For MSME Actors

1. Attend digital marketing training regularly, especially on social media algorithms, content management, and data analysis.
2. Use the analytics features on digital platforms (for example, Instagram Insights, Shopee Analytics, and TikTok Analytics) to learn about customer behavior and determine the most effective posting times.
3. Set a monthly content calendar so that the creation of creative content is more consistent and directed according to market needs.
4. Begin allocating a dedicated budget for small-scale paid advertising as a means of increasing marketing reach.

For the Government

1. Expand region-based digital literacy training programs and provide modules that are easy for MSME actors to understand.
2. Provide incentives or subsidies for MSMEs undertaking digital transformation, such as assistance with website development costs or digital advertising vouchers.
3. Improve the quality of internet infrastructure in the regions so that MSMEs outside major cities can access the digital market on an equal footing.

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For Digital Platforms and Private Institutions

1. Provide business mentoring features for new MSMEs, including consultation on content strategy and online store optimization.
2. Develop features that make it easier for MSMEs to understand store performance, such as simpler and easier-to-use analytics dashboards.

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