



THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN DEVELOPING CULINARY MSMEs IN BANDAR SELAMAT VILLAGE, MEDAN TEMBUNG DISTRICT

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Article Info

Article history:

E-ISSN: 2541-5263

P-ISSN: 1411-4380



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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has encouraged Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to adopt social media as a communication and marketing strategy. However, the use of social media by MSMEs, particularly in semi-urban areas such as Bandar Selamat Village, still faces various challenges. This study aims to analyze the role of social media in improving the performance of culinary MSMEs, by highlighting its impact on customer growth, increased sales, and business development. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews with six MSMEs, and documentation of their digital business activities. The results show that active and strategic use of social media has a positive impact on business performance, especially in aspects of customer interaction and brand presence. These findings support digital marketing communication theory and strengthen empirical evidence regarding the importance of digital literacy in MSME development. This study also reveals variations in effectiveness among business actors influenced by digital skills and content strategies. Implications of this study include the need for social media training for MSMEs and support for an inclusive digital ecosystem. Further research is recommended to cover a wider range of regions and business sectors to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Keywords: MSMEs, social media, business performance, digital communication, digital transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the rapid digital transformation, social media has become a key instrument in transforming the economic landscape, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In the Indonesian context, social media is no longer merely a means of personal communication but has evolved into a strategic tool for marketing, business communication, and strengthening brand awareness. Data from We Are Social (2024) shows that Indonesia has more than 167 million active social media users, meaning more than 60% of the population is digitally

connected. This presents a significant opportunity for MSMEs to reach a wider market at a much more cost-effective rate compared to conventional media.

However, many MSMEs still have not maximized the potential of social media. A study by Anggraeni and Sanaji (2021) showed that most MSMEs face obstacles in utilizing social media due to limited digital literacy, technical skills, and a lack of targeted marketing strategies. This situation demonstrates a significant digital divide, especially in urban, outlying areas such as Bandar Selamat Village, Medan Tembung District. Despite being located in the city center, most MSMEs in this area have not yet fully transformed digitally, despite the promising market potential.

This gap is further exacerbated by local data showing that of the six MSMEs registered in Bandar Selamat Village, only five have actively used social media as a promotional and business communication tool. This is a crucial indicator that education and strategies to strengthen digitalization are still needed so that all MSMEs can optimally benefit from social media. This phenomenon also suggests that digital business communication approaches have not yet been fully internalized into the managerial practices of local MSMEs (Adisty & Nawawi, 2023).

Academically, this issue is crucial to study because it concerns the effectiveness of digital marketing communications and technology-based socio-economic transformation. Previous research has focused primarily on MSMEs in large cities like Jakarta and Bandung, while areas with semi-urban characteristics and heterogeneous digital literacy levels, such as Medan Tembung, have received relatively little attention. This creates a significant research gap, particularly in understanding the role of social media as a catalyst for microeconomic growth at the local level (Adawiyah & Veri, 2024).

Based on this context and urgency, this article aims to empirically analyze the role of social media in increasing the revenue of culinary MSMEs in Bandar Selamat Village. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, using observation and in-depth interviews with MSMEs who have used social media as part of their business strategy. The primary focus of this study is on the forms of social media use, business actors' perceptions of its effectiveness, and its impact on customer growth, profits, and sales volume.

Theoretically, this article is expected to contribute to the development of digital business communication studies, particularly in the context of local MSMEs in Indonesia. Practically, the results of this research are expected to serve as a strategic reference for local governments, academics, and MSME players in designing policies and mentoring programs that are well-targeted and based on real needs on the ground. Thus, MSME digitalization becomes not just a development slogan but also a real solution for strengthening the community economy.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand the social phenomenon of social media use in developing culinary MSMEs in semi-urban communities. Descriptive qualitative research allows researchers to explore the subjective perspectives of MSMEs regarding how they utilize social media, the obstacles they face, and its impact on business revenue. As explained by Creswell (2013), a qualitative approach is used to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups attach to social or humanitarian issues.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observation of MSMEs who have used social media as a means of business promotion and communication. The primary informants were culinary entrepreneurs in Bandar Selamat Village, selected based on the following criteria: (1) active MSMEs for at least one year, (2) consistent use of social media in their business operations, and (3) willingness to provide the required information openly. Secondary data were obtained from literature studies including scientific journals, government policy documents, statistical agency reports, and relevant popular articles.

Data collection techniques employed three main methods: observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted non-participatory, with researchers directly observing patterns of interaction between business actors and consumers via social media, as well as the digital marketing practices employed. Unstructured interviews provided informants with the freedom to express their experiences narratively, resulting in rich and in-depth data. Documentation was used to strengthen data validity through visual or written evidence such as promotional screenshots, account visit statistics, and published materials from the social media platforms used.

The data analysis procedure followed the stages developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014): data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and grouped data based on key themes that align with the research focus. The data were then presented in descriptive narrative form and tables to illustrate emerging patterns. Conclusions were drawn by linking field findings to digital marketing communication theories and the role of social media in MSME development. Data validity is strengthened by triangulation techniques of sources and methods so that the results of this study can be relied upon and applied in similar contexts.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This study reveals how social media is used to improve the performance of culinary MSMEs in Bandar Selamat Village. Key findings come from observations, in-depth interviews with six MSMEs, and documentation of business growth data over the past two years (2023–2024). Based on a simple linear regression analysis, it was found that social media use contributed 75.2% to improved MSME performance, with an R-squared value of 0.752, indicating a strong relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Social Media Use by MSMEs

Six culinary MSMEs studied:

| No. | Business Name | Type of Business | Use of Social Media | Platform Used |
|-----|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Toko Sarapan Pagi Buk Ipah | Micro | Yes | WhatsApp, Facebook |
| 2 | Mie Balap | Micro | Yes | Instagram, Facebook |
| 3 | Mie Aceh Kumis | Micro | Yes | WhatsApp, TikTok |
| 4 | Toko Warkop Ardar | Small | Yes | Instagram, Facebook, TikTok |
| 5 | Toko Sembako Ibu | Micro | Yes | WhatsApp |
| 6 | (Not mentioned) | Micro | No | - |

As many as 5 out of 6 MSMEs have used social media for marketing, indicating that most businesses have recognized the potential of digital media. The majority of entrepreneurs use easily accessible and popular platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram.

The Impact of Social Media Use on Developing MSME Performance

MSME performance is measured based on four main indicators: profit growth, customer growth, sales volume, and workforce expansion. The following is a summary of quantitative data for 2023–2024:

| Name of UMKM | Benefit 2023 | Benefit 2024 | Customer Growth | Sales Growth | Number of employees |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Toko Sarapan Pagi Buk Ipah | Rp 30.000.000 | Rp 40.000.000 | 50 → 62 customer | 300 → 270 transaction | 2 → 2 |
| Mie Aceh Kumis | Rp 70.000.000 | Rp 60.000.000 | 100 → 110 customer | 400 → 370 transaction | 3 → 4 |

| Name of UMKM | Benefit 2023 | Benefit 2024 | Customer Growth | Sales Growth | Number of employees |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Toko Warkop Ardar | Rp 100.000.000 | Rp 90.000.000 | 220 → 245 customer | 300 → 280 transaction | 6 → 8 |
| Firman Store | Rp 35.000.000 | Rp 55.000.000 | 200 → 215 customer | 800 → 840 transaction | 3 → 4 |
| Toko Sembako Ibu | Rp 55.000.000 | Rp 45.000.000 | 100 → 110 customer | 500 → 450 transaction | 1 → 1 |

Several MSMEs showed significant increases in revenue and customer base, such as Firman Store and Breakfast Shop, which actively utilized social media for promotions and customer service. However, MSMEs like Mie Aceh Kumis and Toko Sembako Ibu experienced a decline in sales despite using social media. This indicates that using social media alone is not enough; it must also be accompanied by a content strategy, consistency, and market understanding.

These findings confirm that digital marketing strategies implemented through social media contributed to increased profits, customer base, and employee growth in most of the businesses studied. These findings support digital marketing communications theory, which explains that social media can be an interactive, two-way channel between producers and consumers, enabling the creation of closer relationships and customer loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Theoretically, these findings align with the media richness theory proposed by Daft & Lengel (1986), which states that media with a high level of information richness, such as video, images, and interactivity, are more effective in conveying complex messages—especially in the context of product promotion. Social media offers these features across various platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook), enabling MSMEs to build personal and engaging brand narratives. In this context, utilizing social media allows businesses to build brand awareness, expand market reach, and create a competitive advantage—a finding further supported by the findings of Adawiyah and Veri (2024), who stated that social media plays a strategic role in strengthening the sustainability of MSME businesses.

However, not all MSMEs using social media show consistent growth. For example, Toko Sembako Ibu and Mie Aceh Kumis experienced a decline in sales and profits. This indicates that successful social media use is heavily influenced by content strategy, frequency of interactions, and business owners' understanding of digital consumer behavior. This finding aligns with research by Anggraeni & Sanaji (2021), which emphasized that innovation and branding capabilities are important mediators between social media usage and marketing performance.

Therefore, simply having a presence on social media is not enough; MSMEs must also be able to craft visual messages and narratives that resonate with their market segments.

Several factors that influence the results of this study include: (1) the quality of social media content uploaded by MSMEs (product visualization, upload frequency, interactivity); (2) low technological adaptability among business actors with minimal educational backgrounds; (3) unequal access to digital training; and (4) environmental support such as MSME communities, the role of local government, and digital consultants. These four factors are important determinants in explaining performance variations between MSMEs even though they all use social media.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study highlight the importance of digital literacy education and digital communication strategy training for MSMEs, particularly in semi-urban areas like Medan Tembung. Local governments, academics, and MSME support institutions need to expand social media-based mentoring programs that emphasize not only the technical aspects of platform use but also content planning, algorithm understanding, and insight and engagement analysis. Thus, MSME digitalization involves more than just technology adoption, but also a transformation in mindset and marketing strategy.

Critically, this study has several limitations. First, the limited sample size (only six MSMEs) makes the results less likely to be generalized to the broader population. Second, the qualitative approach employed explores meaning and context but lacks the ability to quantitatively measure broad influences. Third, other external factors such as inflation, purchasing power, and local competitive conditions were not included in the analysis, even though they could influence the results. Therefore, further research is recommended using a mixed methods approach involving more respondents, quantitative analysis of social media content, and consideration of external variables that influence the MSME business ecosystem.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this qualitative study, it can be concluded that the strategic use of social media has contributed significantly to developing the performance of culinary MSMEs in Bandar Selamat Village, particularly through increased customer interaction, sales growth, and expanded market reach. These findings provide a deeper understanding that social media functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a participatory communication medium that encourages consumer loyalty and product innovation. Theoretically, these results strengthen the concept of digital marketing communication and customer engagement in the context of micro-enterprises, and support previous studies that highlight the importance of digital literacy for the sustainability of MSMEs. Socially

and culturally, this study highlights the shift in people's consumption patterns toward the digital space, which requires adaptation by MSMEs, especially in semi-urban communities. However, the limited number of informants and the focus of the study area limit the generalizability of the results. Therefore, further research with a broader scope, a mixed-method approach, and comparative analysis between regions is needed to enrich understanding of the dynamics of MSME digitalization in Indonesia.

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