



Case Study of the Application of Digital Marketing in Increasing the Competitiveness of MSMEs in the Industrial Era 4.0

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the application of digital marketing in increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in Indonesia, focusing on three MSME actors in various sectors: culinary, handicrafts, and retail. Through in-depth interviews, it was found that digital marketing has a positive impact on product visibility, market reach, and interaction with customers. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and marketplaces such as Shopee and Tokopedia allow MSMEs to reach a wider range of consumers, reduce marketing costs, and increase sales. However, the challenges faced by MSMEs include price competition in the marketplace, limited human resources in digital marketing management, and consistency in content creation. This study concludes that the success of the implementation of digital marketing is highly dependent on internal readiness, technology access, and planned strategies. Therefore, MSME actors need to strengthen their digital capabilities through more efficient training and resource management to maximize the potential of digital marketing and strengthen competitiveness in an increasingly competitive global market. The research provides practical implications for MSME practitioners in formulating adaptive digital strategies, for policymakers in designing targeted digital literacy programs, and for business incubators in developing sector-specific mentoring frameworks to enhance the digital competitiveness of Indonesian MSMEs.

Keywords: Digital marketing; MSMEs; competitiveness; social media; marketplace

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has had a significant impact on global business dynamics, including for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Digitalization not only changes the way consumers search for information and buy products, but also changes the pattern of competition between business actors. In this context, digital marketing has emerged as one of the important strategies that allows MSMEs to compete more effectively, efficiently, and adaptively (Silva et al., 2022). Digital marketing's ability to expand market reach, strengthen relationships with customers, and improve promotional capabilities makes it a strategic

instrument for the sustainability of MSMEs, especially in a business climate that is increasingly digitally integrated (Deri, et al, 2025).

MSMEs have a vital role in the Indonesian economy, both in terms of labor absorption, income distribution, and contribution to Gross Domestic Product. However, behind their large contributions, MSMEs face various classic challenges such as limited capital, access to technology, managerial skills, digital literacy, and low business process efficiency. It is in this context that digital marketing is seen as a solution that is able to bridge these limitations. Through the use of social media, marketplaces, websites, and other digital technologies, MSMEs can increase marketing effectiveness at a relatively low cost (Taufik et al., 2023). Furthermore, digital marketing allows MSMEs to reach a wider market segment than conventional marketing, thereby increasing business growth opportunities.

A number of studies show that digital marketing has a positive contribution to improving the performance of MSMEs. Arista and Hermawan (2025) found that digital marketing together with innovation and intellectual capital has a significant influence on the competitive advantage of MSMEs in the food and beverage sector. Their findings confirm that digital marketing is not just a promotional tool, but is closely related to modern business strategies that drive innovation, differentiation, and increased product added value. In line with that, Hakimi et al. (2023) show that the digital readiness of MSMEs in West Sumatra affects the success rate of digital marketing implementation, which ultimately has an impact on improving business performance. These two findings show that digital marketing is an integral part of the strategy to strengthen competitiveness.

Not only at the national level, various international studies have also confirmed the link between the effectiveness of digital marketing and the improvement of business performance. Carolina and Bansa (2025), through a literature review on fashion MSMEs in Indonesia, emphasized that digital marketing plays an important role in strengthening brand awareness and creating product differentiation. Meanwhile, Kurniawati et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of digital adaptation for MSMEs in remote areas, especially through marketing strategies based on local wisdom combined with digital technology. These studies provide an overview that digital marketing is flexible and can be adjusted to local characteristics, business types, and market segmentation.

Another aspect that is no less important is digital readiness. Anatan and Nur (2023) in their research found that the digital readiness of Indonesian MSMEs is still at varying levels. Although access to technology is relatively increasing, many MSMEs do not have adequate digital capabilities to optimize digital marketing. This is strengthened by the study by Hardian and Halilintar (2025), which found that culinary MSMEs still face obstacles in the strategic use of technology, especially related to digital literacy, branding consistency, and the ability to manage digital content. Thus, the success of digital marketing is not only determined by the availability of technology, but also by the internal readiness of MSME actors in adopting the technology.

In addition to digital readiness, marketing communication strategies are also a crucial element in the success of digital marketing. Rusdana et al. (2022) stated that the right digital marketing communication strategy can increase the visibility of MSMEs and strengthen relationships with customers. This includes the selection of digital channels, communication styles, content consistency, the use of storytelling, and direct interaction through social media features. A strong communication strategy allows MSMEs to create emotional closeness with customers, which in turn increases trust and loyalty levels. However, even though the benefits of digital marketing are enormous, the implementation process does not always go smoothly. Fernanda et al. (2024) found that many MSMEs still face obstacles in optimizing digital marketing, mainly due to a lack of digital skills, limited resources, and a lack of knowledge about effective marketing

strategies. In addition, challenges related to changes in digital platform algorithms, price competition in the marketplace, and reliance on third-party platforms are also obstacles for MSMEs in optimizing digital marketing (Sharabati et al., 2024). Thus, digital marketing requires not only creativity, but also a high understanding of strategy and adaptability.

In terms of research methodology, most of the previous studies on MSME digital marketing in Indonesia are still dominated by a quantitative approach, which focuses on measuring the relationship between variables such as digital marketing, performance, competitiveness, and innovation (Arista & Hermawan, 2025; Carolina & Nation, 2025). This approach provides an overview of the influence of digital marketing, but does not fully explain *how* digital marketing strategies are designed, implemented, and interpreted by MSME actors in daily practice. This is where a qualitative approach is needed that is able to capture the dynamics of MSMEs' experiences, strategies, motivations, challenges, and operational contexts in more depth.

In addition to methodological gaps, there are also thematic gaps, namely the lack of research that compares the implementation of digital marketing across MSME sectors. In fact, the characteristics of culinary, handicraft, and retail businesses are very different in terms of business models, innovation cycles, competition intensity, and marketing needs. This difference is very likely to result in variations in the digital marketing strategies applied. Studies that highlight the factors of locality, storytelling, and cultural integration are also limited, even though these aspects are very relevant in the context of Indonesian MSMEs that are full of local identity.

Based on this description, there is an urgent need to present research that is able to explore in depth the experience of MSME actors in implementing digital marketing. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the implementation of digital marketing strategies in three MSMEs from different sectors using a qualitative case study approach. The focus of the research includes the types of digital marketing strategies and tactics used, motivations and considerations in adopting digitalization, factors supporting and limiting implementation, and strategic implications for the competitiveness of MSMEs in the context of Industry 4.0. Thus, this research is expected to contribute theoretically to MSME digital marketing literature and provide practical implications for MSME actors, policymakers, and companion institutions in formulating more effective, adaptive, and sustainable digital strategies. This study addresses both methodological and thematic gaps by employing a qualitative case study across three MSME sectors (culinary, handicrafts, retail), offering in-depth insights into digital marketing implementation, motivations, challenges, and strategic implications for competitiveness in the Industry 4.0 era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study model to explore in depth the application of digital marketing in increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the Industry 4.0 era. The selection of a qualitative approach is based on the need to understand holistically how MSME actors implement digital marketing strategies, what challenges they face, and how they interpret the benefits and obstacles in the process. The qualitative approach provides space for researchers to explore the subjective experiences of MSME actors that cannot be fully explained through a quantitative approach that tends to focus on the relationship between variables only. In addition, this approach allows researchers to understand the social dynamics, operational contexts, and adaptation strategies carried out by MSMEs in dealing with changes in digital technology. The case study model was chosen because it was able to provide a depth of analysis of real practices in the field, especially practices that emerged from the direct experience of MSMEs that have implemented digital marketing. The case study in this

study focuses on three MSMEs engaged in different sectors culinary, handicrafts, and retail—with the aim of capturing the variety of digital marketing contexts and strategies applied by each business actor.

The data collection techniques in this study include in-depth interviews, direct observation, and analysis of supporting documents. In-depth interviews are conducted with MSME owners or managers who actively use digital media as part of their marketing strategy. The interview is semi-structured, so the researcher has basic guidelines but can still adjust the questions to deepen the relevant information according to the informant's answer. This flexibility is important in qualitative research because it allows researchers to capture richer meanings related to the motivation, strategy, understanding, and perception of MSME actors towards digital marketing. T

The main informants in this study consisted of three people: Andi Pratama, the owner of the culinary business "Sate Maranggi Andi" who uses Instagram and GoFood as marketing media; Siti Rahmawati, the manager of the handicraft business "Handmade Craft" who relies on Facebook and Instagram to reach local and international markets; and Budi Santoso, the owner of the retail store "Budi's Store" who markets his products through marketplace platforms such as Shopee and Tokopedia. The three informants were selected through the purposive sampling technique, which is the deliberate selection of informants based on certain criteria that are considered to be able to provide data according to research needs. The criteria for selecting informants include: MSME actors who actively utilize digital marketing, have been operating for at least one year so that they have adequate experience in implementing digital strategies, come from diverse business sectors to provide comparative perspectives, and have felt a positive impact in the form of increased sales or brand awareness after adopting digital marketing.

In addition to interviews, the researcher also conducted direct observations to see how digital marketing activities are carried out in daily practice by each MSME. This observation includes observations on the process of content creation and management, interaction with consumers through social media, the use of marketplace features, and communication patterns displayed in the digital platform. Observations help researchers understand how digital marketing strategies are not only planned but also executed, including how MSME actors adapt to changes in algorithms, content trends, and characteristics of digital audiences. To complete the interview and observation data, the researcher also analyzed documents in the form of business reports, digital records, promotional archives, and other relevant documents. The use of this secondary document helps to strengthen the research findings and provides additional context regarding business developments, previous marketing patterns, and significant changes after the use of digital marketing.

Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This technique allows researchers to identify the main themes that emerge from qualitative data in a systematic manner. The thematic analysis step involves reading the entire data over and over again to understand the overall context, identifying the units of significance that matter, grouping them into categories, and finally building the main themes that represent the phenomenon as a whole. In the context of this study, thematic analysis is used to find the patterns of digital marketing strategies implemented by MSMEs, the challenges they face, the factors supporting their success, and the implications of the use of digital marketing on business competitiveness. After the main themes were obtained, the researcher conducted an interpretation to assess how each element of digital marketing contributes to increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs. This analysis also includes comparisons between cases to identify similarities and differences in digital marketing strategies used by MSME actors from different sectors. This comparative approach allows researchers to draw broader

conclusions regarding the contextual factors that affect the success of digital marketing in various types of businesses (Sharabati et al., 2024; Hamzah & Putri, 2021).

To maintain the validity and reliability of the data, this study applied a triangulation technique. Triangulation is carried out by comparing and ensuring the consistency of information from various data sources, namely interviews, observations, and documents. By using a variety of data sources, researchers can reduce the possibility of bias and strengthen the reliability of findings. In addition to triangulation, this study also applies member checking, which is asking several informants to check and revalidate the results of the analysis conducted by the researcher. This step is important to ensure that the researcher's interpretation does not deviate from the actual meaning intended by the informant. Through member checking, informants can provide feedback on the results of the analysis, correct misinterpretations, and confirm the suitability of the findings with their real experiences. Thus, the quality of research findings becomes more credible and accurate.

This research involves MSMEs from three different sectors, namely culinary, handicrafts, and retail, to provide a more comprehensive picture of the application of digital marketing in various business contexts. Through this multi-case approach, researchers can see how business characteristics affect the digital marketing strategies used, the specific challenges that arise in each sector, and how each MSME actor responds to digital changes. The case study approach that covers the diversity of sectors makes an important contribution to this research, because digital marketing strategies are not universal, but are greatly influenced by product characteristics, target markets, technological capacity, and creativity of business actors in utilizing digital platforms.

Overall, this research method is designed to produce an in-depth understanding of how digital marketing is implemented by MSMEs and how it contributes to increasing their competitiveness. Through the combination of qualitative approaches, triangulation techniques, thematic analysis, and the selection of relevant informants, this study succeeded in exploring the dynamics of digital marketing implementation comprehensively. Thus, the research method used is not only able to describe the strategies carried out by MSMEs, but also able to explain the context, motivations, challenges, and strategic implications that accompany the implementation of digital marketing in the world of small and medium-scale businesses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Digital Marketing Strategy by MSMEs

In the face of the rapid development of digital technology in the Industry 4.0 era, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are required to be able to adapt to changes in consumption patterns, customer behavior, and increasingly competitive competition dynamics. Digital marketing is one of the main strategies that is seen as able to answer these needs, because it allows MSME actors to optimize marketing with affordable costs, wider reach, and more efficient interaction with consumers. Based on the results of interviews with three MSME actors namely Andi Pratama, owner of the culinary business "Sate Maranggi Andi"; Siti Rahmawati, owner of the "Handmade Craft" handicraft business; and Budi Santoso, the owner of the "Budi's Store" retail it can be seen that the implementation of digital marketing in MSMEs is very diverse depending on the characteristics of the business, the digital capabilities of the owners, and the target market of each one. This is in accordance with the argument of Silva et al. (2022) who stated that digital marketing strategies are contextual and not universal, so that every business actor will adjust the digital methods applied based on their needs and resources.

In the first case, Andi Pratama used Instagram as the main promotional medium for his culinary products. According to Andi, the main advantage of Instagram is its ability to present visual content in an attractive manner, so that consumers can assess the quality

and attractiveness of food products before deciding to buy. Visual content serves as an "appetizer" as well as a powerful communication tool to build a positive brand image. In his interview, Andi stated, "Through Instagram, I can show the process of making satay and share stories about the quality ingredients we use. This increases consumer interest and expands the exposure of our products." This strategy is in line with the opinion of [Silva et al. \(2022\)](#) who emphasized that visual storytelling has a significant influence on increasing consumer engagement in the culinary sector.

In addition, Andi also uses the GoFood platform as a digital distribution channel that can reach a wider range of consumers without geographical limitations. The use of food delivery applications such as GoFood not only makes it easier for consumers to make purchases, but also speeds up the transaction process and increases daily sales potential. The integration between visual content on Instagram and ease of transaction through GoFood is a form of integrated digital marketing strategy that can provide added value for culinary business actors. Thus, it can be concluded that Andi implements digital marketing comprehensively, namely through a combination of content-based digital marketing and application-based digital distribution.

Unlike Andi, who focuses on the culinary sector, Siti Rahmawati implements a digital marketing strategy that emphasizes creativity and storytelling aspects. As a handicraft business actor, Siti understands that her products have artistic and emotional value that can be communicated through social media such as Instagram and Facebook. He uses both platforms to introduce products, display the manufacturing process, provide tutorials, and hold live sessions to interact directly with customers. Siti emphasized that Facebook is still an effective platform to reach more mature markets, such as housewives or craft communities, while Instagram is more suitable for younger audiences and likes visual aesthetics.

In her interview, Siti explained that she often shares product photos, creation videos, and the story behind each work to build an emotional connection with consumers. This strategy is in line with the concept of storytelling in marketing which states that narratives are able to create emotional value and increase customer perception of product quality ([Silva et al., 2022](#)). In addition, Siti also uses influencer collaboration techniques, which she says are effective in increasing customer awareness and trust. The collaboration is carried out by selecting influencers who have an audience according to the market segment of handicraft products, so that the promotions carried out are more on target. This is supported by research by [Taufik et al. \(2023\)](#), who stated that collaboration with influencers can increase customer trust and significantly expand the marketing network.

On the other hand, Budi Santoso chose a digital marketing approach through marketplace platforms such as Shopee and Tokopedia. As a retail business actor, Budi considers that the marketplace provides convenience in managing transactions, logistics, and product distribution nationwide. "Through the marketplace, we don't have to worry about payment or delivery infrastructure, because everything has been provided," he said. The marketplace also allows Budi's products to be found by consumers through search features, product categories, and algorithmic recommendations. Selling retail products through marketplaces is an effective strategy for MSME players who want to expand their market reach without having to build their own e-commerce platform.

Budi also took advantage of paid advertising features on Shopee and Tokopedia to increase product visibility. According to him, this feature helps place products in a strategic position so that they are easier to find by potential consumers. This approach is in line with the research of [Hidayat et al. \(2024\)](#) which states that marketplaces provide great opportunities for MSMEs to increase market access through the support of logistics systems and integrated promotional features. Thus, Budi's use of the marketplace can be

said to be a digital marketing strategy based on mass distribution, which aims to expand the market and increase daily sales volume.

Although the three MSME actors feel significant benefits from the implementation of digital marketing, they also face various challenges that need to be considered. One of the main challenges is the limited time and human resources. Siti, for example, admitted that it was difficult to manage the time to manage social media accounts consistently. He must divide the focus between production, packaging, customer service, and digital marketing. According to [Sharabati et al. \(2024\)](#), limited human resources and lack of digital capabilities are the most common obstacles to the implementation of digital marketing among MSMEs.

Meanwhile, Budi faces a different challenge, namely the fierce price competition in the marketplace. According to him, many business actors offer similar products at much cheaper prices, so this condition often forces MSMEs to lower prices to attract consumer interest. However, such a strategy can have an impact on a decrease in profit margins. [Indarwati \(2023\)](#) emphasized that fierce price competition in the marketplace can weaken the competitiveness of MSMEs because they do not have the production capacity of large companies.

On the other hand, Andi experienced challenges in maintaining visual content consistency and building product differentiation amid the increasing number of digital culinary businesses. He realizes that consumers need creative, informative, and visually appealing content. Therefore, he must continue to innovate in content creation and engagement strategies.

Overall, the implementation of digital marketing by MSME actors studied shows that digital marketing strategies not only expand market reach, but also help build brand identity, increase engagement, and strengthen business competitiveness. The three MSME actors adopt digital marketing strategies based on their product characteristics and market preferences. Andi utilizes visualization and delivery platforms, Siti maximizes storytelling and social interaction, while Budi optimizes marketplaces and paid advertising strategies. This shows that digital marketing is not uniform, but must be adjusted to the specific needs of the business so that the results are optimal.

By considering these benefits and challenges, it can be concluded that the implementation of digital marketing by MSMEs is a strategic step in facing modern market dynamics. However, it is necessary to increase digital capacity, time management, and a planned marketing strategy so that MSMEs are able to maximize the potential of digital marketing in a sustainable manner. These findings are in line with research by [\(Silva et al., 2022\)](#) and [Sharabati et al. \(2024\)](#) who argue that the success of digital marketing in MSMEs is influenced by internal readiness, access to technology, content creativity, and adaptability to digital changes.

Types of Tactics and Digital Media Used

In the ever-growing digital era, the use of digital marketing by MSMEs has become one of the main strategies to develop the market and increase their competitiveness. Based on interviews conducted with three key informants, namely Andi Pratama, owner of the culinary business "Sate Maranggi Andi", Siti Rahmawati, the manager of the handicraft business "Handmade Craft", and Budi Santoso, the owner of the retail store "Budi's Store", it was revealed that various digital marketing tactics were used to optimize sales and product visibility.

Andi Pratama, the owner of "Sate Maranggi Andi", explained that he relies heavily on the Instagram platform to market his products. "Instagram is the most effective social media for culinary businesses because it allows us to visually showcase products. Appetizing food images can attract the attention of consumers in a matter of seconds," said Andi. She uploads photos of culinary products, provides information about the

ingredients used, and shares stories about the process of making satay that she makes carefully. In this case, visual content is the main element that can attract consumer attention and increase brand awareness. Not only pictures, Andi also uses Instagram Stories to display daily activities in the store, share promotions, and organize quizzes with prizes to attract new customers. In addition, the use of relevant hashtags is also a strategy used to increase organic reach and connect products with a wider audience.

On the other hand, Siti Rahmawati, the manager of "Handmade Craft", also uses social media as the main tool to market her handicraft products. However, apart from Instagram, Siti added Facebook as the main platform to introduce products to an older audience. "On Facebook, I can reach a wider audience, especially housewives and people who are more interested in handmade and handicraft products," said Siti. On Facebook, he often does live streams to show the process of making products, as well as holding online events such as special discounts or creative contests, which aim to capture the attention of the audience and introduce the product even further. Facebook allows MSME managers to interact directly with customers, provide information about products, and receive feedback in real-time.

In addition to Facebook and Instagram, TikTok is now starting to be used by many MSME actors to develop their audience. TikTok offers very high viral potential, especially with short video content that can attract attention in a short time. As revealed by Budi Santoso, the owner of "Budi's Store", who also started to turn to TikTok to reach a younger market. "We started trying TikTok to promote our retail products because the platform is very popular with the younger generation. We make short videos that show how to use our products, as well as relevant tips and tricks," said Budi. The use of TikTok Ads and influencer marketing is also part of the digital marketing strategy implemented by Budi, with the aim of utilizing the platform's virality to increase sales.

In addition to social media, the use of marketplaces is also one of the most widely used digital marketing tactics by MSMEs. Marketplaces such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Bukalapak provide convenience for MSMEs to market their products without the need to have their own website or e-commerce application. Budi Santoso revealed that he relies heavily on Shopee and Tokopedia to market retail products. "Marketplaces give us access to a wider market. We don't need to worry about payment infrastructure or shipping goods, because they already provide a ready-to-use system," said Budi. Budi also took advantage of paid advertising features on Shopee and Tokopedia to increase product visibility among thousands of other sellers. According to [Taufik et al. \(2023\)](#), the use of marketplaces is not only beneficial for MSMEs in terms of operational efficiency, but can also increase brand exposure, which is a key element in expanding the customer base. Through the marketplace, MSMEs also benefit from various features offered, such as flash sales, massive discounts, and loyalty programs that can encourage consumers to make repeat purchases. [Sharabati et al. \(2024\)](#) in their research show that time-based promotions and loyalty programs are effective strategies that can increase consumer engagement and provide added value for MSMEs that use marketplace platforms.

In addition to social media and marketplaces, several MSME players also implement Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to increase the visibility of their products on search engines such as Google. Siti Rahmawati revealed that she uses SEO to increase the number of visitors to her website. "We focus on optimizing keywords that are frequently searched for by potential customers, as well as ensuring that our website is easily accessible and optimized for mobile devices," explained Siti. By doing proper SEO optimization, marketed handicraft products can appear in the first search results when customers search for similar products on Google. SEO provides long-term benefits, as traffic coming from organic search is more sustainable compared to paid advertising. According to [Silva et al., 2022](#), SEO can greatly help MSMEs to increase their visibility in digital markets, which in turn can attract more customers. An effective SEO strategy includes

using the right keywords, improving the quality of the content, and speeding up the loading time of website pages. This allows MSME players to compete with larger businesses that may have much larger marketing budgets.

Email marketing is also one of the tactics used by several MSMEs to build closer relationships with customers. Andi Pratama stated that he uses email to send monthly newsletters to his loyal customers. "Through email, I can inform customers about new menus, special discounts, and specific events. This helps maintain good relationships with our customers," said Andi. Email marketing allows MSMEs to build long-term relationships with customers, remind them of products or services they've tried, and encourage them to make a repeat purchase. [Hasan & Akter \(2023\)](#) in their research revealed that email marketing can increase customer retention and loyalty, which is very important for the growth of MSMEs.

One of the tactics that is becoming increasingly popular is collaboration with influencers and affiliate marketing. Siti Rahmawati stated that she often invites influencers who have an audience that is relevant to her handicraft products to promote her products. "Collaborating with influencers provides an opportunity for me to reach a wider audience without spending a lot of advertising costs," explained Siti. Influencers can provide additional credibility and visibility for MSME products, which makes them more trusted by their audience. In addition, some MSMEs also take advantage of affiliate marketing, where they pay commissions to individuals or platforms that successfully lead customers to buy their products. From interviews with informants, it can be concluded that digital marketing tactics applied by MSMEs vary, depending on the business sector and the intended audience. The use of social media (such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok) has proven to be a very effective tool for introducing products and improving interaction with consumers. According to [\(Silva et al., 2022\)](#), social media allows MSMEs to create high brand awareness at a relatively low cost. This is very important considering that many MSMEs are limited to marketing budgets.

The implementation of marketplaces also shows a positive impact on sales, especially in expanding the market without having to have your own e-commerce infrastructure. [Sharabati et al. \(2024\)](#) revealed that marketplace platforms allow MSMEs to reach consumers widely, take advantage of the payment and delivery facilities that have been provided by the platform, and reduce the obstacles often faced by MSMEs in running their business independently.

In addition, SEO and email marketing are effective strategies to increase product visibility on search engines and maintain relationships with customers. The use of SEO allows MSMEs to target consumers who already have purchase intent, thereby increasing conversion rates. Meanwhile, email marketing supports customer retention and creates a more personal connection with the audience, as described by [Hasan & Akter \(2023\)](#). However, while these various digital marketing tactics provide many benefits, challenges also arise. MSMEs often face difficulties in managing multiple platforms and strategies simultaneously. Therefore, it is important for MSMEs to choose tactics that suit the resources they have and ensure that they can execute marketing strategies consistently.

Motivation and Considerations for Using Digital Marketing by MSMEs

The motivation of MSME actors in adopting digital marketing is increasing in line with the development of information technology and changes in people's consumption patterns that increasingly depend on digital platforms. Based on the results of interviews with three MSME actors Andi Pratama from the culinary business "Sate Maranggi Andi", Siti Rahmawati from the handicraft business "Handmade Craft", and Budi Santoso from the retail "Budi's Store" it was found that the drive to use digital marketing emerged from various factors, both internal factors (business strategy, cost efficiency, adaptability) and external factors (market competition, changes in consumer behavior, and technological

developments). These various motivations show that digital marketing is not only seen as a complement, but as a vital element for the sustainability and growth of MSMEs in the current competitive era.

One of the main motivations for MSME actors in utilizing digital marketing is the encouragement to expand market reach. As conveyed by Andi Pratama, before using Instagram and GoFood, the majority of customers only came from around their business locations. But after utilizing social media and delivery services, he started receiving orders from outside the city. This shows that digital marketing is able to penetrate geographical boundaries, providing opportunities for MSMEs to market products to areas that were previously difficult to reach. These findings are in line with the opinion of (Silva et al., 2022) who affirm that digital marketing allows MSMEs to expand the market in a more efficient and effective way than conventional marketing methods.

On the other hand, Siti Rahmawati revealed that digital marketing helps her display the uniqueness of her products in a more attractive way. In the world of handicrafts, the value of a product lies not only in its physical form, but also in its story, manufacturing process, and philosophy. Through Instagram and Facebook, he can display all these aspects in the form of photos and videos, so that his handicraft products not only look attractive, but also have emotional value that can increase consumer buying interest. The story behind the product (storytelling) is one of the key elements in the communication strategy that he implements. This is supported by research by Hasan & Akter (2023) which states that narrative content on social media is able to increase emotional closeness between customers and brands, thereby encouraging customer loyalty.

Meanwhile, for Budi Santoso, who runs a retail business, his main motivation in using marketplaces such as Shopee and Tokopedia is the ease of the sales system and operational efficiency. Marketplace provides a complete infrastructure for online sales, such as automated payment systems, integrated logistics services, and promotional features that can help increase sales. In other words, marketplaces reduce the workload of MSMEs in managing online stores independently, so they can focus on product management and customer service. Budi's findings are in line with Hidayat et al.'s (2024) research which states that marketplaces provide a great opportunity for MSMEs to expand their customer network without having to have in-depth technical knowledge about e-commerce.

In addition to the motivation to expand the market and increase efficiency, more affordable marketing costs are also an important consideration for MSME players. Andi and Siti assessed that the cost of promotion through social media is much cheaper than traditional advertising such as pamphlets, billboards, or advertisements in print media. In addition to being cheap, social media also provides flexibility in content creation and allows two-way communication that cannot be obtained through traditional media. In the context of MSME actors who often have limited capital, digital marketing is present as a cost-effective but still effective marketing solution. (Silva et al., 2022) emphasized that cost efficiency is one of the biggest reasons for MSMEs to switch to digital marketing.

Another motivation that encourages the use of digital marketing is the flexibility of time and place. Siti stated that she can upload content at any time without having to be at the business location. This flexibility is very beneficial, especially for MSME players who have to handle various aspects of their business independently, from production, marketing, to customer service. Digital marketing allows MSME actors to manage promotions according to their work rhythm. This shows that digital technology is not only changing the way businesses are promoted, but also the way MSMEs manage their time and daily work.

In addition to strategic motivation, there are also psychological and social motivations, such as the desire to gain recognition and build a strong brand image. In the interview, Siti mentioned that positive interactions from customers through comments

and support are an encouragement for her to continue to be active on social media. This reflects the phenomenon of digital reputation, where the presence and image in the digital world affect the way business people view themselves and the business they run. According to [Taufik et al. \(2023\)](#), digital reputation is very important in building customer trust, especially for MSMEs that do not have strong brand awareness.

However, before deciding to use digital marketing, MSME actors also consider several risk factors. For example, limited technical capabilities are often an initial obstacle to implementing digital strategies to the fullest. Siti admitted that she did not have professional graphic design skills, so she had to learn independently related to photo editing, video creation, and content management. Similar challenges were also found in the research of [Hasan & Akter \(2023\)](#) which stated that the lack of digital skills is one of the biggest obstacles to MSMEs in optimizing digital marketing. Budi faces a different challenge, namely very tight price competition in the marketplace. He realizes that to be able to compete in the marketplace, MSME actors must consider product prices strategically. However, lowering prices too low can reduce profit margins and hurt businesses in the long run. This is reinforced by [Indarwati \(2023\)](#) who states that price competition is a classic problem in the marketplace ecosystem because consumers tend to choose products with the lowest prices, regardless of added value or quality.

In addition, MSME actors also consider the aspect of consistency in running digital marketing. Andi admitted that creating content every day requires a large commitment of time and energy. Often, he has to take photos or videos on the sidelines of the business of running a business. According to [Sharabati et al. \(2024\)](#), consistency in content creation is a common challenge faced by MSMEs, as they do not have a dedicated team that can fully manage digital marketing. Another consideration that arises is the change in algorithms on digital platforms. Social media algorithms can change at any time, affecting the reach of content uploaded by MSME actors. This makes digital marketing strategies need to be updated regularly to remain effective. This uncertainty is one of the factors that make MSME actors have to continue to learn and adapt.

Overall, the motivation and consideration of MSME actors in using digital marketing shows complex dynamics. Their main motivation stems from the need to expand the market, improve cost efficiency, and establish better relationships with customers. Meanwhile, challenging considerations include technical capabilities, content consistency, algorithm changes, and price competition. Despite the various challenges, MSME actors still see digital marketing as a strategic opportunity to increase competitiveness and business sustainability.

The Initial Impact of Digital Marketing Implementation

The implementation of digital marketing by MSMEs has had a significant impact on their business performance, both in terms of increasing visibility, sales, and interaction with customers. From the interviews conducted with the three main informants, Andi Pratama, the owner of the culinary business "Sate Maranggi Andi", Siti Rahmawati, the manager of the handicraft business "Handmade Craft", and Budi Santoso, the owner of the retail store "Budi's Store", it can be seen that digital marketing has a considerable impact in various aspects of their operations and marketing strategies.

Andi Pratama, who relies on Instagram and GoFood to market culinary products, revealed that one of the most visible impacts after implementing digital marketing is the increase in the number of customers who come through digital platforms. "In the past, my customers only came from around the area where the business was located. But after we were active on Instagram and GoFood, we started getting orders from outside the city," he said. GoFood, as a food ordering platform, provides tremendous advantages in terms of making it easier for consumers to order food without having to come in person. Meanwhile, Instagram has allowed Andi to develop a broader and deeper brand

awareness, by presenting compelling visual content and the story behind every culinary product he offers. This increase in visibility and brand awareness is in line with the findings of (Silva et al., 2022) who stated that the use of social media as a marketing tool helps MSMEs introduce their products to a wider audience, which can have a direct impact on increasing sales and competitiveness.

On the other hand, Siti Rahmawati, the owner of "Handmade Craft", noted that the initial impact that was most felt after she implemented Instagram and Facebook was increased customer interaction and higher engagement. "Instagram and Facebook allow me to interact directly with customers. We can get direct feedback about the product and also get to know consumer tastes better," explained Siti. Social media allows Siti to hold story-based campaigns and interactive promotions that invite customers to participate. For example, it held a photo contest for handicraft products that customers could participate in by uploading product photos with certain hashtags. This increases customer loyalty and strengthens their relationship with the brand. Instagram Stories and Facebook Live are also effective means to introduce new products in a more personalized and engaging way. According to Taufik et al. (2023), direct interaction facilitated by social media platforms increases customer engagement and builds stronger relationships between MSME actors and customers, which has a positive impact on customer retention and loyalty.

Meanwhile, Budi Santoso, who uses Shopee and Tokopedia, felt a very positive impact in terms of increasing sales through the marketplace. "By using Shopee and Tokopedia, I can sell products outside the city, even outside the island, without having to worry about shipping or payment. I can also get more visitors because my products are easier to find," said Budi. Marketplaces such as Shopee and Tokopedia provide benefits for MSMEs because they provide integrated payment and logistics infrastructure, so that MSME actors can focus more on marketing and product management. Paid advertising on these platforms also helps to increase product visibility and attract more customers. Based on research by Sharabati et al. (2024), marketplaces provide a huge opportunity to expand market reach and help increase sales through existing promotional features. With relatively affordable costs, MSMEs can access a wider and more segmented market.

In addition, although the impact felt is very positive, each MSME actor also mentioned some initial challenges faced in implementing digital marketing. Andi mentioned that one of the first challenges was the time management between production and marketing. "Sometimes we focus too much on production, so we forget to create consistent content. In fact, social media requires content that is constantly updated to keep attracting the attention of the audience," added Andi. This is in line with the findings from Hamzah and Putri (2021) who stated that one of the main obstacles in the adoption of digital marketing by MSMEs is the lack of time and energy to manage digital marketing consistently, especially when MSME actors have to handle many other aspects of business operations.

On the other hand, Siti Rahmawati revealed the challenges related to branding consistency on social media. Although she received a lot of positive feedback, Siti found it difficult to maintain a consistent brand image amid diverse content demands. "I have to balance product promotion, the story behind the product, and content that invites customer interaction. Sometimes this is a challenge in maintaining the consistency of our brand," he said. This challenge is often faced by MSME actors who try to adapt their marketing strategies to diverse audiences and social media platforms that continue to change their dynamics.

Budi Santoso, although satisfied with the increase in sales obtained through the marketplace, revealed the challenges related to the increasingly fierce price competition. "Many other sellers offer lower prices, and that greatly affects our profit margin," explained Budi. This is a challenge faced by many MSME players who rely on the

marketplace as the main sales channel, where price competition is very fierce and can affect their competitiveness. Indarwati (2023) noted that in the marketplace, price competition is the main problem faced by MSMEs because they find it difficult to compete with large business actors who have larger production capacity and can offer lower prices.

The initial impact of the implementation of digital marketing by MSMEs recorded in this study shows an increase in visibility and sales, as well as an increase in engagement with customers. The use of social media by Andi and Siti shows that visual content and product narrative have a great influence in attracting consumer attention and introducing products in a more personal way. This is very relevant to the content marketing theory which states that the use of interesting and interactive content can increase brand awareness and customer engagement (Silva et al., 2022). In addition, the use of platforms such as GoFood, Shopee, and Tokopedia provides advantages in the form of easy access to a wider market, both local and international, as well as reduced marketing and logistics costs. This is in accordance with the findings of Taufik et al. (2023), who revealed that marketplaces provide great opportunities to introduce products to a wider market at a more cost-efficient rate.

However, despite the positive impact, challenges related to time constraints, content consistency, and price competition remain obstacles that need to be overcome by MSMEs. Research by Hasan and Akter (2023) also states that challenges like this often hinder the optimization of digital marketing strategies among MSMEs, especially if they do not have sufficient resources or marketing teams. In this context, MSME actors need to pay attention to resource aspects and long-term planning to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of their digital marketing strategies.

Overall, the initial impact of the implementation of digital marketing by MSMEs, as experienced by Andi, Siti, and Budi, showed very positive results in terms of increasing brand awareness, sales, and interaction with customers. However, challenges such as time constraints, content consistency, and price competition remain obstacles that must be overcome. In order to maximize the potential of digital marketing, MSMEs need to focus on efficient time and resource management, as well as develop a more structured and planned marketing strategy. This will allow them to remain competitive and succeed in the face of increasingly digital market changes.

Supporting Factors and Limitations in the Implementation of Digital Marketing Strategies by MSMEs

The implementation of digital marketing in MSMEs is inseparable from various supporting factors and obstacles that affect the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. These factors can come from the internal and external environment that directly determines the extent to which MSME actors can take advantage of digital technology. Based on in-depth interviews with three MSME actors—Andi Pratama from the culinary business "Sate Maranggi Andi", Siti Rahmawati from the handicraft business "Handmade Craft", and Budi Santoso from the retail "Budi's Store"—it can be seen that the initial success of their digital marketing strategy was greatly influenced by technological support, creativity, adaptability, and external factors such as the characteristics of the digital market and platform infrastructure. But behind that, there are also significant challenges that hinder the optimization of digital marketing strategies, such as limited human resources, content consistency, digital skills, and high levels of competition on marketplace platforms.

One of the main supporting factors in the implementation of digital marketing is the ease of access to digital technology. Andi Pratama said that he can carry out a digital marketing strategy using only smartphones and internet networks. The existence of applications such as Instagram and GoFood makes it easier for him to take pictures,

upload content, and interact with customers directly. According to him, today's digital technology is getting simpler and user-friendly, so it does not require a special technical background to be able to be used. This is in line with the opinion of (Silva et al., 2022), who stated that ease of access to technology is one of the most important elements in supporting the adoption of digital marketing by MSMEs, especially in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia.

In addition, the presence of digital platforms that provide interactive features such as comments, direct messages, and live streaming features allows MSME actors to build more personalized communication with consumers. Andi revealed that he often gets questions about the menu, price, and the process of making products through the Instagram direct message feature. These interactions not only increase customer engagement, but also provide valuable insights into consumer preferences. In the context of MSMEs, this is important because most business actors do not have formal structured market data, so direct information from customers becomes very valuable in improving the quality of products and services. In Siti Rahmawati's case, the main supporting factor that makes her digital marketing strategy successful is creativity in content creation. As a handicraft business actor, Siti uses social media to display the production process, product details, and the story behind each work. The creativity of this content is an added value that attracts consumers' attention and distinguishes their products from competitors. He also relies on storytelling skills to strengthen brand identity. Hasan & Akter (2023) emphasized that creativity is a key factor in digital marketing because unique and interesting content is easier to go viral and get users' attention.

In addition to creativity, consistency in uploading content is also an important factor. Siti admitted that she tries to maintain the rhythm of uploads every few days so that her consumers continue to get new information and do not lose interest. This consistency becomes an important part of social media algorithms, which tend to rank higher to accounts that are active and frequently interact with the audience. Therefore, MSME actors need to understand that the success of digital marketing does not only depend on the quality of content, but also on the frequency and sustainability of marketing activities. In the context of Budi Santoso, the main supporting factor in the implementation of digital marketing is the support of a complete and easy-to-use marketplace infrastructure. Shopee and Tokopedia provide logistics systems, automatic payment features, promotional services, and sales analysis features that help MSME actors understand customer behavior. With this structured platform, Budi does not need to build his own e-commerce system, which of course will take a lot of time and money. According to Hidayat et al. (2024), marketplaces democratize market access for MSMEs because they can compete with big brands through an equal and transparent system.

However, every MSME actor also faces various limitations that have the potential to hinder the implementation of digital marketing. One of the most common limitations is the limitation of human resources. Most MSMEs are only managed by one or two people, so business actors have to divide their time between production, marketing, operations, and administration. Andi admitted that it was difficult to manage content consistently because he had to focus on the cooking process and customer service. This causes digital marketing activities to often be overlooked, even though he knows the importance of regular and interesting content. This limitation of human resources is strengthened by the findings of Sharabati et al. (2024), who stated that one of the biggest obstacles for MSMEs in implementing digital marketing is the lack of a workforce with digital skills. Many MSME actors still rely on trial-and-error methods in creating content, organizing promotions, or understanding how platform algorithms work. This limited technical knowledge causes the strategies applied to be less than optimal.

Siti faces a different challenge, namely maintaining branding consistency across various digital platforms. According to him, each platform has different audience

characteristics Instagram tends to attract younger users, while Facebook has users with a wider age range. This makes him have to adjust the communication style, visual design, and type of content uploaded. The inability to tailor content to audience preferences can cause digital marketing strategies to not achieve maximum results. This branding challenge also has to do with changes in social media algorithms that often affect how content is displayed to audiences. Meanwhile, Budi faces one of the biggest challenges in the marketplace, namely the high level of price competition. On the marketplace platform, consumers can easily compare prices between one store and another. This forces MSME players like Budi to lower prices to remain competitive, which can ultimately reduce profit margins. Budi revealed that many sellers offer similar products at very low prices, so he must be creative in highlighting the added value of his products so that they do not only compete on price. This finding is in line with [Indarwati \(2023\)](#), who stated that price competition is one of the main obstacles to MSMEs in the marketplace because the digital market is very competitive and transparent.

In addition, technical obstacles such as unstable internet connections, limited devices, and lack of photography facilities are also obstacles for some MSMEs. For example, poorly lit product photos or poor lighting can reduce the appeal of the product on social media or marketplaces. In fact, attractive visuals are very important in digital marketing. Technical challenges like these seem simple, but they have a significant impact on overall digital marketing performance. Another obstacle faced by MSME actors is the reliance on digital trends and algorithms. Social media algorithms can change at any time, so strategies that were previously effective can become less effective. MSME players must continue to monitor content trends, understand the best upload times, and adapt to new features introduced by the platform. This requires additional time and energy, as well as the ability to learn quickly.

On the other hand, external supporting factors such as digital communities, online business forums, and digital marketing workshops can also help MSMEs in improving their knowledge about digital marketing. Many MSME actors learn independently through online tutorials, free webinars, or discussion groups that provide tips and digital marketing strategies. This ecosystem support makes it easier for MSMEs to improve digital capabilities without having to spend large costs. Overall, the implementation of digital marketing by MSMEs is influenced by a combination of supporting factors and barriers that interact with each other. Supporting factors such as access to technology, creativity, flexibility of digital platforms, and marketplace features provide great opportunities for MSMEs to grow and compete. However, obstacles such as limited human resources, lack of digital skills, content consistency, and price competition remain challenges that need to be overcome. These findings are in line with research by [Silva et al., 2022](#)) and [Sharabati et al. \(2024\)](#), which states that the success of MSME digital marketing is greatly influenced by the adaptability of business actors to digital changes and their ability to take advantage of the opportunities provided by technology

Strategic Implications for MSME Competitiveness

The implementation of digital marketing in MSMEs has very important strategic implications for their competitiveness in the digital era. The findings of the study based on interviews with three MSME actors—Andi Pratama (culinary), Siti Rahmawati (handicrafts), and Budi Santoso (retail)—show that the use of digital media not only has an impact on increasing sales or visibility, but also on the ability of MSMEs to survive, adapt, and develop differentiation in an increasingly competitive business environment. This strategic implication is important to analyze because it provides an overview of the relationship between digitalization and the long-term competitive advantage that MSMEs can obtain.

One of the most obvious strategic implications is increased visibility and brand awareness. The use of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok by Andi and Siti, as well as the use of marketplaces by Budi, has allowed MSME products to be known by a wider audience, even outside the area of origin of their business. Andi said that before using digital marketing, most of his customers only came from surrounding areas, but now orders come from various cities. This shows that digital marketing can eliminate geographical limitations that previously hindered the expansion of the MSME market. According to (Silva et al., 2022), increasing market reach is one of the main ways digital marketing strengthens the competitiveness of MSMEs, as it provides an opportunity for small companies to compete with big brands on a more equal level.

In addition to increasing visibility, digital marketing also creates significant product differentiation. Siti, for example, uses storytelling techniques to promote her handicraft products. By highlighting the manufacturing process, the story behind the design, and the cultural value of each product, it creates uniqueness that competitors don't have. This differentiation is crucial in a competitive strategy because consumers not only buy the product, but also the values, stories, and identities attached to it. This kind of strategy is in line with Porter's (1985) concept of Competitive Advantage, which states that firms can achieve a competitive advantage through differentiation or cost efficiency. In the context of MSMEs, the combination of storytelling and visual creativity is an important tool to create differentiation that is difficult for competitors to imitate.

On the other hand, Budi's use of the marketplace has strategic implications in terms of operational efficiency. Marketplace provides an integrated logistics, payment, and customer service system, so MSMEs do not need to invest large capital to build their own system. This allows them to allocate resources to other aspects such as improving product quality. According to Hidayat et al. (2024), the existence of marketplaces makes MSMEs more competitive because they can maximize operational cost efficiency while significantly expanding the market. This cost efficiency is a form of competitive advantage that is relevant for MSMEs that have limited capital.

Another strategic implication can be seen from the increase in more personal relationships between MSMEs and customers. Live interaction features such as direct messages, comments, and live streaming allow business owners to build more effective two-way communication. This not only creates closeness, but also increases customer loyalty. This loyalty can be a differentiating factor between successful MSMEs and those that fail to survive in the competition in the long run. Taufik et al. (2023) emphasize that high customer engagement has a strong correlation with increased customer retention and repurchases, which are important indicators of business success.

In addition, digital marketing also provides MSMEs with access to customer data that can be used for strategic decision-making. Through analytics features available on platforms such as Instagram Insights, Facebook Analytics, and marketplace dashboards, MSMEs can learn about customer preferences, the best interaction times, the most popular products, and purchasing patterns. This data is invaluable for formulating long-term strategies. For example, Andi studied the hours when his posts got the highest engagement to determine the optimal content upload time. Budi analyzed the sales history on Shopee to determine which products needed to be stocked. According to Sharabati et al. (2024), the ability to utilize data (data-driven decision making) is one of the strategic advantages provided by digitalization, as it allows companies to make decisions based on facts, not assumptions.

However, while digital marketing provides many strategic advantages, there are also negative implications that must be considered. One important implication is the increasing intensity of competition in the digital market. Budi revealed that one of the biggest challenges he faced was price competition in the marketplace. Consumers can compare prices easily, so MSME actors must compete not only in product quality but also

price. This competition has the potential to squeeze profit margins. [Indarwati \(2023\)](#) stated that in the context of the marketplace, price competition is very tight because consumers tend to choose products with the lowest prices, especially for products that do not have strong differentiation. Thus, MSME actors need to think about differentiation strategies or other added value so as not to get caught up in a price war.

Another strategic implication is related to the reliance on digital platforms. For example, changes in social media algorithms can affect the reach of content, while changes in marketplace policies can affect promotional costs or sales commissions. Siti mentioned that she sometimes experiences a drop in engagement for no apparent reason, which may be due to changes in the platform's algorithm. This kind of dependency creates strategic risks for MSMEs, as they do not have full control over the platforms used. Therefore, diversifying platforms or using personal websites can be a long-term mitigation strategy.

In addition, digital marketing demands high adaptability to changing trends. Content that was effective in the past is not necessarily effective today. For example, the trend of short videos has become very popular with the rise of TikTok, making many MSMEs have had to change their content strategy from static photos to creative videos. If MSME actors are unable to adapt to new trends, they will lag behind competitors. [Hasan & Akter \(2023\)](#) emphasized that the success of digital marketing is highly dependent on the ability of business actors to keep up with the development of content trends and consumer preferences.

Another strategic implication relates to the development of internal capabilities. Digital marketing demands new skills such as copywriting, product photography, video editing, data analysis, and customer management. Andi, Siti, and Budi are both aware that to maintain the sustainability of their digital marketing strategy, they must learn and improve their digital skills independently. The development of these skills has long-term strategic implications, because the higher the digital capabilities of MSME actors, the greater their chances of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage.

In the context of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory by Barney (1991), digital marketing capabilities can be considered as valuable, rare, difficult to replicate, and irreplaceable internal capabilities (VRIN). For example, Siti's creativity in storytelling, Andi's ability to take interesting product photos, or Budi's ability to read marketplace sales data are strategic assets that are not easily imitated by competitors. Thus, digital marketing capabilities can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage for MSMEs.

In addition, digital marketing also strengthens the position of MSMEs in facing the dynamics of the modern market that is increasingly competitive. The ability of MSMEs to be present digitally provides an opportunity to reach the younger generation who are very active in cyberspace. This segment is very important for the long-term sustainability of the business because it has a consumption pattern that tends to be digital-first. If MSMEs are able to adapt to the needs of this segment, they can secure a wider market share. Not only that, digital marketing helps MSMEs to be more responsive to changes in the external environment. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, MSMEs that already have a digital presence are able to survive better than those that have not taken advantage of digital technology. This shows that digital marketing is not only a marketing tool, but also a risk mitigation strategy.

Overall, the strategic implications of the implementation of digital marketing for the competitiveness of MSMEs are very broad and profound. Digital marketing provides opportunities for MSMEs to increase visibility, expand markets, create differentiation, build relationships with customers, and make data-driven decisions. On the other hand, MSMEs also have to face challenges such as price competition, reliance on digital platforms, changing trends, and the need to develop new skills. These findings are in line with [\(Silva et al., 2022\)](#) and [Sharabati et al. \(2024\)](#), who emphasized that digital

marketing has a strategic role in increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs, but the success of its implementation is highly dependent on internal readiness, adaptability, and the right long-term strategy.

Comparative Synthesis Across Three MSME Cases

The comparative analysis across the three MSME cases reveals both convergent patterns and sector-specific variations in digital marketing implementation. All three businesses—Andi's culinary venture, Siti's handicraft enterprise, and Budi's retail operation—demonstrate that digital marketing significantly enhances visibility, market reach, and customer engagement. However, their strategic approaches differ substantially based on sector characteristics. The culinary business prioritizes visual appeal and delivery platforms (Instagram and GoFood), leveraging appetizing imagery to drive immediate purchase decisions. The handicraft sector emphasizes storytelling and creative content (Instagram, Facebook, and influencer collaborations) to build emotional connections and communicate artisanal value. Meanwhile, the retail business focuses on marketplace infrastructure (Shopee and Tokopedia) to achieve operational efficiency and nationwide distribution. Despite these strategic differences, all three face common challenges: limited human resources, time constraints for consistent content creation, and the need for continuous digital skill development. The key distinction lies in their competitive pressures—while culinary and handicraft businesses compete primarily on creativity and brand differentiation, retail MSMEs face intense price competition in marketplace ecosystems. This comparative synthesis underscores that successful digital marketing strategies for MSMEs must be tailored to sector-specific needs while maintaining consistency, creativity, and adaptability as universal success factors.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital marketing implementation plays a strategic role in enhancing MSME competitiveness in Indonesia's Industry 4.0 era, enabling MSMEs to overcome geographical limitations, expand market reach, build brand awareness, and strengthen customer relationships through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and marketplaces (Shopee, Tokopedia). The research contributes theoretically by addressing methodological gaps through qualitative case study methodology and thematic gaps by providing cross-sector comparative insights into digital marketing implementation across culinary, handicraft, and retail MSMEs. Practically, the findings demonstrate that while digital marketing offers substantial opportunities for visibility and sales growth, successful implementation requires sector-specific strategies, continuous digital skill development, consistent content creation, and adaptability to platform algorithm changes and market dynamics, with challenges including limited human resources, time constraints, and intense price competition in digital marketplaces.

Based on these findings, it can be emphasized that digital marketing provides a huge opportunity for MSMEs to increase competitiveness and expand market reach, but the success of its implementation is largely determined by the organization's internal readiness, adaptability to technological changes, and a structured and sustainable strategy. MSMEs that are able to adapt to these changes will be better able to maintain their existence and increase competitiveness in the midst of increasingly fierce market competition. Digital marketing also provides long-term advantages, especially with the existence of analytics data on social media and marketplaces that can be used to understand consumer behavior and design more strategic marketing decisions.

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