



Empowering Culinary Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises through Digital Marketing: A Qualitative Study in Mataram City, Indonesia

Desi Suryati^{1*}, Rohmiati Amini², Meiyanti Widyaningrum³, Samsuriadi Samsuriadi⁴

¹Universitas Nahdlatul Wathan, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study explores how digital marketing strategies can enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of culinary Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Mataram City, Indonesia. The research responds to the structural challenges faced by local enterprises in the post-pandemic era, particularly the need for digital transformation in marketing and customer engagement. A qualitative approach was employed through interviews, observation, and system prototyping. The study developed and tested a digital marketing model integrating website-based promotion tools with social media and marketplace platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Shopee, and Tokopedia. The findings indicate that the adoption of digital marketing improves visibility, customer interaction, and transaction efficiency, enabling MSMEs to expand their market reach and strengthen business resilience. The research concludes that digital marketing serves not only as a technological innovation but also as a strategic empowerment tool that fosters digital literacy and entrepreneurial adaptability among MSME actors. The implications of this study emphasize the need for continued digital capacity-building programs and government facilitation to accelerate inclusive economic recovery at the regional level.

KEYWORDS:

Digital marketing;
MSMEs; culinary
industry;
entrepreneurship;
digital transformation;
Mataram City;
Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of marketing practices from conventional approaches to digital-based systems has become a defining feature of the modern business landscape. The rapid advancement of digital technology, particularly in information and communication systems, has profoundly changed how enterprises operate, promote, and connect with consumers. For Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), digital marketing represents not merely a technological innovation but a fundamental strategic shift that determines business survival and competitiveness in the digital economy. In Indonesia, the acceleration of digital transformation has been further catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted traditional market interactions and compelled businesses to adopt online marketing channels as their primary mode of engagement (Kumar et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2022).

MSMEs constitute a vital pillar of Indonesia's economic structure, contributing more than 61 percent to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing over 97 percent of the labor force (BPS, 2023). Despite this substantial contribution, MSMEs remain highly vulnerable to market fluctuations, limited access to finance, and technological constraints. The pandemic exposed structural weaknesses in the MSME ecosystem, particularly in marketing and business resilience. Many enterprises that relied on conventional methods—such as physical stores and word-of-mouth promotion—faced sharp declines in revenue and operational disruptions. Consequently, the adoption of digital marketing has emerged as a strategic necessity rather than an optional innovation.

Digital marketing can be understood as the use of digital technologies, platforms, and networks to communicate, promote, and deliver value to customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). Unlike traditional marketing, which depends on physical interactions, digital marketing leverages online platforms such as social media, e-commerce marketplaces, and web-based promotional tools to reach

a wider audience at relatively low cost. Previous studies [Lugman et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Ramadhan & Kim \(2023\)](#) have shown that digital marketing enhances visibility, builds brand trust, and improves sales performance, particularly for small enterprises with limited resources. Furthermore, the flexibility and data-driven nature of digital marketing allow MSMEs to better understand customer preferences and design targeted promotional strategies.

The relevance of digital marketing is particularly pronounced in the culinary sector, which is one of the most dynamic yet competitive segments of the MSME landscape. Culinary MSMEs are highly sensitive to changes in consumer behavior and market trends. In urban centers such as Mataram City, where tourism and service industries are major economic drivers, digital marketing offers a strategic avenue to enhance competitiveness. Using online platforms such as Instagram, Shopee, and WhatsApp Business, culinary entrepreneurs can build direct relationships with consumers, engage in real-time communication, and showcase their products visually. The potential of these platforms to create brand awareness and loyalty is well documented in emerging market contexts ([Hassan & Pandey, 2021](#); [Putri et al., 2023](#)).

However, the adoption of digital marketing among MSMEs in Mataram remains uneven. Many entrepreneurs face barriers in technological literacy, digital infrastructure, and strategic utilization of online platforms. Although various governmental and community programs have promoted digital inclusion, the practical implementation of digital marketing among small-scale culinary businesses is still limited. This gap suggests that while awareness of digital tools has increased, their effective integration into daily business operations remains a challenge. The digital divide, especially between micro and small enterprises, continues to hinder the realization of the full benefits of digital transformation ([Setiawan et al., 2023](#)).

From a theoretical perspective, the adoption of digital marketing can be framed within the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Digital Capability Framework (DCM). The TAM posits that technology adoption is influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use ([Davis, 1989](#)). In the context of MSMEs, digital marketing is more likely to be adopted when entrepreneurs perceive it as beneficial for expanding market reach and when it is easy to operate despite limited technical expertise. Meanwhile, the Digital Capability Framework emphasizes the importance of organizational readiness, digital literacy, and resource allocation as determinants of successful digital transformation ([Vial, 2021](#)). The integration of these frameworks provides a comprehensive understanding of the behavioral and structural factors that shape MSMEs' digital marketing adoption.

The city of Mataram provides an ideal case for examining these dynamics. As the economic hub of West Nusa Tenggara Province, Mataram hosts more than 22,000 MSMEs, of which approximately 45 percent operate in the culinary sector ([Dinas Koperasi dan UKM, 2022](#)). The city's economic structure is characterized by vibrant microenterprise activity, yet many businesses remain in the informal sector and struggle to access formal marketing channels. In this context, digital marketing offers not only a pathway to commercialization but also a means of empowerment, enabling local entrepreneurs to integrate into broader economic networks.

This study therefore aims to analyze the role of digital marketing in strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of culinary MSMEs in Mataram City. Specifically, it seeks to identify how digital marketing applications—spanning social media, web platforms, and online marketplaces—contribute to market expansion, efficiency, and entrepreneurial resilience. The research employs a qualitative approach to capture the lived experiences and adaptive strategies of MSME actors in adopting digital marketing. By exploring these dimensions, the study contributes to the growing literature on MSME digital transformation in emerging economies and provides practical insights for policymakers, business associations, and digital ecosystem stakeholders.

Ultimately, this research underscores that digital marketing is not merely a technological innovation but a socio-economic catalyst for inclusive growth. Through the empowerment of MSMEs, particularly in the culinary sector, digital marketing holds the potential to transform local economies, promote innovation, and enhance the competitiveness of regional enterprises in the global digital marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on digital transformation and MSME competitiveness has expanded considerably over the past decade, reflecting growing recognition that digitalization serves as both an economic and social driver of inclusive development. This section reviews relevant studies on digital marketing, technology adoption, and digital capability frameworks, with specific attention to their implications for the culinary MSME sector in Indonesia and comparable Southeast Asian economies.

Digital marketing is widely defined as the strategic use of digital technologies and platforms to communicate, promote, and deliver products and services to target audiences (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). It encompasses various tools such as social media, search engines, websites, and e-commerce platforms, all of which enable businesses to reach wider audiences at lower costs than traditional marketing. In the context of MSMEs, digital marketing has emerged as an accessible and effective means to enhance market presence, build customer relationships, and improve operational efficiency (Hassan & Pandey, 2021).

Empirical studies consistently show that digital marketing significantly influences enterprise performance. For instance, Ahmad et al. (2021) found that the integration of social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, contributes to improved brand visibility and customer loyalty among Malaysian SMEs. Similarly, in the Indonesian context, Saputra et al. (2023) demonstrated that microenterprises using digital channels experience higher sales turnover and faster response rates to customer inquiries compared with those relying solely on offline promotion. These findings highlight how digital marketing supports not only revenue generation but also the enhancement of business resilience, particularly during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The culinary sector benefits greatly from digital marketing due to its visual and experiential nature. Online promotion through images, videos, and interactive content allows culinary MSMEs to communicate product quality, authenticity, and value more effectively. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee have become virtual marketplaces where food-based entrepreneurs can engage directly with consumers and cultivate long-term loyalty (Ramadhan & Kim, 2023). The immediacy and social connectivity of these platforms foster consumer trust and emotional engagement, both of which are crucial for small enterprises competing in crowded markets.

The adoption of digital marketing technologies by MSMEs can be explained through the *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989). According to TAM, two core beliefs determine technology adoption: perceived usefulness (the degree to which users believe a technology enhances their performance) and perceived ease of use (the degree to which users believe using a technology is free of effort). In MSME contexts, both perceptions are shaped by entrepreneurs' literacy, previous experiences, and organizational readiness (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008).

Empirical research has extended TAM to explore the behavioral intentions of small entrepreneurs toward digital innovation. Rahman et al. (2022) found that perceived usefulness strongly influences the adoption of e-commerce tools among Indonesian MSMEs, while perceived ease of use is often constrained by low digital capability. Similarly, studies in Thailand Sukphisit & Pongpaew (2022) and Vietnam Nguyen & Tran (2023) reveal that MSMEs adopt digital marketing tools when platforms are user-friendly, affordable, and supported by peer learning networks. These findings underline the importance of capacity-building programs that not only introduce technology but also enhance entrepreneurs' confidence and competence in using it.

In the case of Mataram's culinary MSMEs, technology adoption is often hindered by limited digital exposure and insufficient training opportunities. Many business owners rely on personal or informal learning to operate online tools, resulting in partial or inconsistent utilization. This aligns with Setiawan et al. (2023), who noted that small enterprises in Indonesia face challenges related to digital skill gaps and the absence of tailored government support systems. Consequently, technology adoption remains uneven and highly dependent on individual initiative and social networks.

Beyond individual behavioral factors, the success of digital marketing implementation depends on organizational readiness and digital capability. The *Digital Capability Framework* (DCM) conceptualizes digital transformation as a process of acquiring and integrating resources—technological, human, and

strategic—that enable organizations to adapt and innovate in digital environments (Vial, 2021). DCM emphasizes five key dimensions: digital culture, customer experience, digital operations, business model innovation, and data analytics.

For MSMEs, digital capability involves not only the acquisition of technology but also the ability to align digital tools with business objectives. According to Garzoni et al. (2020), MSMEs with higher levels of digital maturity tend to exhibit better market responsiveness, improved customer management, and stronger resilience to economic shocks. In the Indonesian context, Prasetyo et al. (2022) found that the effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives is largely determined by the presence of digital leadership, organizational learning, and the integration of online systems into existing business processes.

The literature also identifies the critical role of government and intermediary institutions in fostering MSME digital capability. Public–private partnerships, digital literacy programs, and online training platforms have been found to significantly improve adoption rates (OECD, 2021). However, local studies such as Wulandari and Sari (2023) argue that regional disparities in infrastructure and education continue to limit MSME participation in the digital economy, especially in areas outside major metropolitan centers. This insight is highly relevant to the Mataram case, where digital infrastructure has improved in recent years, but the distribution of knowledge and access remains uneven.

From a developmental perspective, digital marketing is increasingly viewed as a tool for empowerment rather than merely a commercial strategy. It provides small enterprises with access to new markets, enhances their bargaining power, and reduces dependency on intermediaries (Haryono & Putri, 2022). By lowering entry barriers and transaction costs, digital platforms democratize market participation and enable MSMEs to compete more effectively with larger firms.

Moreover, digital marketing promotes gender inclusion and youth entrepreneurship. Studies by Budiarto et al. (2023) and Khan et al. (2022) show that women and young entrepreneurs are among the most active adopters of digital marketing in Indonesia, using it to build home-based businesses and leverage social media influence. This phenomenon illustrates how digital entrepreneurship can support sustainable livelihoods and contribute to poverty alleviation when supported by inclusive policy frameworks.

In the context of Mataram’s culinary MSMEs, digital marketing represents an opportunity to strengthen both business sustainability and community identity. Many culinary enterprises in Mataram are rooted in local traditions and cultural values, offering distinctive products such as sate rembiga, ayam taliwang, and local snacks. Through digital platforms, these businesses can promote local culinary heritage to a broader audience, thereby contributing not only to economic growth but also to cultural preservation. This dual role of digital marketing—as both an economic and cultural catalyst—positions it as a vital component of local development strategies.

The literature review reveals several key insights. First, digital marketing consistently enhances MSME performance through greater visibility, customer engagement, and cost efficiency. Second, technology adoption depends on perceived usefulness, ease of use, and organizational readiness, all of which are shaped by digital literacy and external support. Third, while previous studies have explored digital marketing adoption in major urban centers, there remains limited empirical understanding of its implementation in secondary cities such as Mataram, where MSMEs operate within distinctive socio-cultural and infrastructural contexts.

Therefore, this study addresses the gap by examining how digital marketing functions as a mechanism of empowerment for culinary MSMEs in Mataram City. It explores not only the adoption process but also its broader implications for competitiveness, sustainability, and inclusive economic recovery. By integrating insights from the Technology Acceptance Model and Digital Capability Framework, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of digital transformation among MSMEs in emerging economies.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach designed to explore in depth how digital marketing strategies contribute to the empowerment and competitiveness of culinary Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Mataram City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an interpretive understanding of the experiences, challenges, and adaptive behaviors of entrepreneurs in applying digital marketing within real business contexts. Rather than focusing on statistical generalization, the study aims to capture the contextual richness of digital transformation processes among small-scale enterprises operating in a dynamic local economy.

The research was conducted between January and May 2023 in several culinary business centers across Mataram City, including Cakranegara, Ampenan, and Selaparang. These areas were selected because they represent diverse forms of culinary entrepreneurship, ranging from traditional food stalls and home-based catering services to modern *cafés* and online food vendors. The respondents were selected purposively to ensure representation from different scales and levels of digital adoption. The participants included owners and managers of culinary MSMEs, local government officers from the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs, and digital facilitators from community-based organizations involved in digital literacy programs. In total, fifteen respondents were interviewed, consisting of ten MSME owners, three government officers, and two digital mentors.

Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and, when necessary, online via Zoom or WhatsApp, depending on the convenience and availability of the respondents. The semi-structured interview format allowed flexibility in probing deeper insights about the respondents' motivations, perceived challenges, and benefits of digital marketing. Questions explored areas such as the type of digital platform used, the frequency of use, the perceived effectiveness in reaching customers, and the changes experienced in sales, efficiency, or brand recognition. Observations were carried out by visiting business locations and examining the way entrepreneurs integrated online marketing tools with physical operations. Supporting data were also collected from official documents, government reports, and digital media used by the MSMEs, including their social media pages, e-commerce profiles, and promotional materials.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to digital marketing adoption and its impact. The analysis followed three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, all interview transcripts and field notes were reviewed, and relevant statements were categorized into meaningful codes. The data display phase involved organizing coded information into thematic matrices to identify links between digital practices, perceived benefits, and entrepreneurial outcomes. The final stage, conclusion drawing, involved interpreting the connections among themes to develop an integrated understanding of how digital marketing influences the competitiveness and empowerment of culinary MSMEs.

To ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation across data sources and collection methods. Information from interviews was cross-checked with observational notes and secondary data, such as online profiles and marketplace statistics, to verify consistency. Member checking was also conducted by sharing summarized findings with several respondents to validate the accuracy of interpretations. This process helped refine the analysis and ensured that the results authentically reflected the participants' perspectives.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the objectives of the study, their right to withdraw, and the confidentiality of their information. Pseudonyms were used in all records and reports to protect the identities of participants.

In line with the study's purpose, the methodological design emphasizes the lived experiences of MSME actors rather than quantitative metrics of success. By capturing narratives of adaptation and innovation, this approach reveals how entrepreneurs navigate both opportunities and barriers in the digital ecosystem. The qualitative strategy thus provides a rich contextual understanding of how digital marketing functions as both an economic strategy and a form of empowerment for small business owners. The findings derived from this methodological framework are expected to contribute to

theory-building in the field of MSME digitalization and to provide practical insights for policymakers and development practitioners seeking to strengthen digital inclusion at the regional level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Culinary MSMEs in Mataram City

The culinary MSMEs in Mataram City represent one of the most dynamic yet challenging sectors of the local economy. The city, with its strong cultural heritage and tourism-driven development, provides a diverse market environment for small food enterprises. Most culinary MSMEs in Mataram are categorized as micro-scale businesses, often family-owned and operated with limited capital and human resources. They range from traditional food vendors selling local dishes such as *ayam taliwang*, *sate rembiga*, and *plecing kangkung*, to more modern *cafés* and catering services catering to middle-income consumers and tourists.

Field observations and interviews revealed that the majority of MSMEs in this sector rely heavily on direct sales and personal networks. Their marketing strategies traditionally depend on location visibility and customer referrals rather than systematic branding or advertising. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a structural shift in consumer behavior, with increasing reliance on online orders and digital interaction. Many entrepreneurs reported a decline in offline sales during lockdown periods, which compelled them to experiment with social media and digital marketplaces as alternative marketing channels.

The adoption of digital marketing among these businesses varied widely. Some entrepreneurs have fully embraced digital platforms by creating official Instagram or Shopee pages, while others still depend on WhatsApp broadcasts or occasional posts on Facebook. The heterogeneity of digital adoption levels reflects differences in digital literacy, age, and exposure to technology training. Younger entrepreneurs, particularly those under 35 years old, were generally more adaptive and proactive in managing online content, while older business owners often relied on assistance from family members or external digital facilitators.

Adoption and Application of Digital Marketing

The adoption of digital marketing tools by culinary MSMEs in Mataram can be understood as a gradual process that combines experimentation, adaptation, and learning by doing. Interviews revealed that many entrepreneurs initially adopted digital tools out of necessity rather than strategic planning. During the pandemic, government programs and community initiatives—such as digital literacy workshops organized by the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs—introduced business owners to online marketing platforms. However, the actual application of these tools depended largely on individual initiative and perceived usefulness.

Entrepreneurs who perceived digital marketing as an effective way to expand their market reach were more likely to sustain its use. For example, one business owner in Cakranegara explained that after posting food photos regularly on Instagram, her daily customer orders doubled, with many coming from outside her neighborhood. Another respondent in Ampenan described how using WhatsApp Business allowed him to manage customer orders more efficiently and maintain closer relationships with clients. These experiences illustrate the strong influence of perceived usefulness on technology adoption, as predicted by the Technology Acceptance Model.

Nevertheless, ease of use remained a major barrier for several respondents. Some older entrepreneurs expressed difficulty in managing multiple online platforms, such as linking Instagram posts to Shopee or responding to customer messages promptly. Limited understanding of digital analytics also prevented them from evaluating the effectiveness of their online campaigns. Despite these constraints, many respondents expressed enthusiasm for continuing to learn, highlighting that digital marketing, though challenging, offers tangible benefits such as increased visibility, lower promotional costs, and closer engagement with customers.

Impact of Digital Marketing on Business Performance

The qualitative evidence demonstrates that digital marketing has brought notable changes in the business performance of culinary MSMEs in Mataram. Respondents reported improvements across three main dimensions: market expansion, operational efficiency, and brand recognition.

First, digital marketing facilitated significant market expansion. Entrepreneurs who actively promoted their products through online channels experienced a substantial increase in their customer base. They could reach consumers beyond local boundaries and attract orders from neighboring districts such as Lombok Barat and Lombok Tengah. This geographic expansion is particularly important for small-scale enterprises that previously depended solely on walk-in customers. The use of e-commerce platforms such as ShopeeFood and GrabFood enabled them to integrate their operations into broader online ecosystems, aligning their businesses with the preferences of digitally savvy consumers.

Second, operational efficiency improved using digital communication tools. Platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Instagram Direct Message, and Google Forms allowed business owners to handle customer orders systematically and track demand more effectively. Some respondents developed scheduling systems to manage delivery times, while others used digital payment systems such as QRIS to facilitate cashless transactions. These innovations contributed to time savings and reduced administrative errors, indicating that digital marketing has a spillover effect on overall business management.

Third, brand recognition and consumer trust increased because of consistent digital presence. Culinary MSMEs that maintained active and visually appealing social media accounts were able to build stronger customer relationships. Frequent posting of product photos, testimonials, and behind-the-scenes content helped humanize the business and foster emotional engagement with customers. Entrepreneurs also observed that customers became more loyal when they could easily communicate with the seller online. This relational dynamic mirrors findings in the broader digital marketing literature that emphasize trust and authenticity as key drivers of consumer behavior ([Hassan & Pandey, 2021](#)).

Challenges in Implementing Digital Marketing

Despite the clear benefits, the study identified several challenges that hindered optimal digital marketing implementation among culinary MSMEs. The most persistent obstacle was the limited level of digital literacy. Many entrepreneurs lack the technical skills required to manage multiple online platforms effectively. They often struggle with tasks such as editing product photos, writing persuasive captions, or analyzing customer engagement data. These difficulties reduce the consistency and professionalism of their online branding efforts.

Financial constraints also remain a significant barrier. Although digital marketing is generally more affordable than traditional advertising, maintaining online visibility still requires investment in internet data, digital tools, and occasionally paid promotions. For microenterprises operating on narrow profit margins, these costs can be burdensome. Additionally, access to stable internet connectivity varies across the city; while central business areas enjoy reliable connections, outer districts experience occasional network instability that disrupts online operations.

Another challenge involves the lack of integrated support systems. While local government agencies and universities have initiated several digital literacy programs, these efforts are often short-term and fragmented. Many MSMEs attend introductory workshops but receive little follow-up assistance in applying digital skills to their businesses. Respondents emphasized the need for continuous mentorship and peer learning opportunities that go beyond basic training. Without sustained support, newly acquired skills tend to diminish over time, reducing the long-term impact of digital capacity-building programs.

Social and psychological barriers also play a role. Some entrepreneurs expressed fear of technology failure or skepticism toward online transactions. A few reported unpleasant experiences with fake customers or negative online feedback, which discouraged them from maintaining an active digital

presence. These findings suggest that digital marketing adoption involves not only technical competence but also mindset transformation and confidence building.

Empowerment and Socioeconomic Implications

Beyond its economic impact, digital marketing has significant implications for empowerment and social inclusion among MSME entrepreneurs. The study found that digital marketing enables small business owners—especially women and youth—to participate more actively in the digital economy. Many women respondents indicated that managing online sales from home provided them with flexible income opportunities while fulfilling family responsibilities. This pattern aligns with global evidence showing that digital entrepreneurship enhances women’s financial independence and contributes to gender equality (Khan et al., 2022).

Furthermore, digital marketing fosters community-based collaboration. Several respondents reported engaging in informal online networks where business owners share promotional tips, coordinate joint sales events, or exchange experiences about dealing with customers. These digital communities create a supportive environment that strengthens collective resilience and encourages innovation. In this way, digital marketing acts not only as a commercial tool but also as a medium for social learning and empowerment.

From a broader developmental perspective, the integration of culinary MSMEs into digital platforms contributes to local economic dynamism. As more businesses adopt digital marketing, the local ecosystem becomes more interconnected, stimulating ancillary services such as delivery logistics, payment systems, and digital content creation. This networked growth fosters what scholars describe as a “digital spillover effect,” where technological adoption in one sector accelerates innovation and competitiveness in others (Vial, 2021). For Mataram City, this process aligns with regional policy objectives to build a resilient, inclusive, and digitally integrated local economy.

Interpretation within Theoretical Frameworks

The findings of this study resonate with the theoretical perspectives discussed in the literature review. The adoption patterns observed among culinary MSMEs are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model, where perceived usefulness strongly drives digital marketing adoption, while perceived ease of use often becomes a limiting factor. Entrepreneurs continue to use digital platforms when they perceive direct benefits in terms of sales and visibility, even if they face operational challenges. This reflects a pragmatic, outcome-oriented mindset characteristic of micro-scale enterprises.

At the same time, the Digital Capability Framework provides insight into why some businesses succeed more than others in leveraging digital tools. MSMEs that demonstrate higher organizational readiness—through family support, prior exposure to technology, and proactive learning attitudes—tend to achieve more meaningful results. Their ability to integrate digital platforms into daily operations represents an early stage of digital maturity. Conversely, businesses with limited digital resources or fragmented strategies exhibit slower progress.

These findings emphasize that digital transformation is not merely a matter of technology availability but of institutional readiness and human capability. For policymakers, this means that infrastructure investment must be complemented by sustained efforts in capacity building, mentorship, and ecosystem development. For MSME practitioners, the study highlights the importance of strategic consistency—maintaining regular online engagement, measuring marketing performance, and aligning digital efforts with broader business goals.

Summary of Discussion

Overall, the research demonstrates that digital marketing has transformed the way culinary MSMEs in Mataram City conduct business, interact with customers, and perceive their role in the local economy. Through digital platforms, small enterprises can overcome traditional limitations of scale and geography, gaining access to broader markets and new forms of social capital. However, the sustainability of this transformation depends on continuous learning, supportive infrastructure, and inclusive policy design.

The discussion underscores that digital marketing should not be viewed merely as a set of promotional tools but as an integrated process of empowerment, learning, and innovation. When effectively adopted, it enhances not only business competitiveness but also social cohesion and resilience among entrepreneurs. Hence, fostering digital capability among MSMEs is both an economic imperative and a developmental priority for achieving inclusive growth in Indonesia's emerging digital landscape.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of digital marketing among culinary Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Mataram City, Indonesia, and its implications for business competitiveness and empowerment. The findings clearly demonstrate that digital marketing functions as both an economic strategy and a transformative tool that reshapes how local enterprises engage with markets and adapt to technological change. Through the adoption of digital platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp Business, Shopee, and Tokopedia, culinary MSMEs have been able to expand their market reach, improve operational efficiency, and enhance brand recognition. These outcomes underline the practical benefits of digitalization for micro and small entrepreneurs operating in resource-constrained environments.

However, the results also reveal that digital transformation among MSMEs is an uneven process influenced by several contextual factors. While some entrepreneurs have successfully integrated digital marketing into their operations, others struggle with technological barriers, limited digital literacy, and inconsistent access to infrastructure. The study identified perceived usefulness as the strongest determinant of adoption, confirming the assumptions of the Technology Acceptance Model. Entrepreneurs continue to utilize digital tools when they observe tangible benefits such as increased sales, customer engagement, and time efficiency. Conversely, perceived ease of use remains a challenge, particularly for older entrepreneurs and those lacking prior exposure to digital platforms.

The findings also support the Digital Capability Framework, emphasizing that successful digital marketing requires not only access to technology but also organizational readiness and human capability. Businesses that demonstrate learning orientation, adaptability, and family or community support tend to achieve higher levels of digital integration. This reinforces the notion that digital transformation is not purely technological but socio-institutional, requiring collaboration between government, educational institutions, and digital ecosystem actors to sustain progress.

From a socio-economic perspective, digital marketing contributes to empowerment by enabling broader participation of marginalized groups—particularly women and youth—in the digital economy. Many respondents highlighted that managing online sales has provided flexible and independent sources of income, fostering self-reliance and confidence. Furthermore, the growth of digital networks and online business communities has enhanced collective learning and cooperation among entrepreneurs, strengthening the social fabric of local enterprise ecosystems.

Based on these findings, several implications can be drawn. For policymakers, it is crucial to move beyond one-off digital training programs toward continuous mentorship and ecosystem-based capacity building. Public-private collaboration should focus on creating digital infrastructure that supports inclusivity and long-term skill development. For practitioners, the study suggests that digital marketing should be integrated into broader business strategies rather than treated as a temporary trend. Consistency, authenticity, and responsiveness in online engagement are key factors for sustaining customer trust and market relevance.

In conclusion, the research underscores that digital marketing is not merely a promotional technique but a developmental pathway for MSMEs. It empowers entrepreneurs to transcend traditional limitations of scale, geography, and access, thereby contributing to more inclusive and resilient local economies. For Mataram City and similar emerging urban centers, investing in digital literacy, infrastructure, and innovation ecosystems will be essential for ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation reach the smallest and most vulnerable enterprises.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the publication of this study.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the paper.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S. Z., Ahmad, N., & Bakar, A. R. (2021). Social media adoption and its impact on SME performance in Malaysia. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 59(3), 468–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2020.1844498>
- Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS). (2023). *Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia 2023*. BPS-Statistics Indonesia.
- Budiarto, M., Hartono, S., & Gunawan, E. (2023). Gender, digital entrepreneurship, and social media marketing among women MSMEs in Indonesia. *Sustainability*, 15(3), 2119. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032119>
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2022). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319–340. <https://doi.org/10.2307/249008>
- Garzoni, A., De Turi, I., Secundo, G., & Del Vecchio, P. (2020). Fostering digital transformation of SMEs: A four-level approach. *Management Decision*, 58(8), 1543–1562. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-07-2019-0939>
- Haryono, E., & Putri, A. D. (2022). Digital empowerment and inclusive entrepreneurship in Indonesia: Evidence from MSME digitalization programs. *Asian Journal of Business and Accounting*, 15(2), 101–120. <https://doi.org/10.22452/ajba.vol15no2.5>
- Hassan, A., & Pandey, J. (2021). Social media marketing and consumer trust: Insights from emerging economies. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 62, 102619. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102619>
- Khan, M. M., Sultana, S., & Roy, R. (2022). Women entrepreneurship in the digital economy: Empowerment through e-commerce participation. *Information & Management*, 59(6), 103674. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2022.103674>
- Kumar, V., Dixit, A., Javalgi, R. G., Dass, M., & Das, M. (2021). Digital transformation of small firms in the post-pandemic world. *International Small Business Journal*, 39(8), 701–727. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02662426211031545>
- Luqman, A., Alam, M., & Ismail, N. (2022). The effects of digital marketing adoption on business growth: Evidence from microenterprises in Indonesia. *Sustainability*, 14(12), 7196. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14127196>
- Nguyen, H. T., & Tran, P. Q. (2023). Factors influencing the adoption of social media marketing by SMEs in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 35(4), 887–909. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-11-2021-0846>
- OECD. (2021). *The digital transformation of SMEs: Policies for inclusive growth*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/bdb9256a-en>
- Prasetyo, P. E., Yulian, R., & Lestari, A. (2022). The role of digital leadership and innovation capability on SME performance in Indonesia. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 14(6), 950–967. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-04-2021-0161>

- Putri, M. F., Rahman, A., & Nabila, Z. (2023). Culinary marketing through TikTok: Consumer engagement and creative content strategies among Indonesian MSMEs. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 29(2), 289–307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2021.2008374>
- Rahman, M. M., Nugroho, B., & Hidayat, M. (2022). Technology acceptance and digital innovation among small business entrepreneurs in Indonesia. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 179, 121637. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.121637>
- Ramadhan, M., & Kim, J. (2023). The role of social media engagement in promoting MSME performance during economic uncertainty. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 25(1), 93–111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-022-10290-y>
- Saputra, R., Lestari, D., & Ningsih, W. (2023). E-commerce adoption and business resilience of Indonesian microenterprises in the post-pandemic era. *Journal of Asian Business and Economic Studies*, 30(2), 211–230. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JABES-08-2022-0150>
- Setiawan, Y., Dewi, F., & Handayani, R. (2023). Barriers to digital transformation of small enterprises: Evidence from Indonesia's local economies. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 30(4), 734–755. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-09-2021-0345>
- Sukphisit, S., & Pongpaew, C. (2022). Digital marketing adoption among Thai SMEs: Drivers and barriers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 14(3), 412–428. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJBA-08-2021-0341>
- Venkatesh, V., & Bala, H. (2008). Technology acceptance model 3 and a research agenda on interventions. *Decision Sciences*, 39(2), 273–315. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5915.2008.00192.x>
- Vial, G. (2021). Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 30(2), 101692. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2021.101692>
- Wulandari, T., & Sari, R. D. (2023). Regional digital readiness and SME competitiveness in Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 9(2), e13358. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e13358>