

Optimizing Digital Marketing Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises in North Sulawesi

ABSTRACT

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This study aims to identify internal and external factors of MSMEs related to digital marketing and formulate strategies and recommendations so that the use of digital marketing is optimal and has good competitiveness in local, national, and global markets. To achieve this goal, a quantitative method is used; the population of this study is MSME actors who are considered to understand external and internal factors and are involved in forming their business strategies. Samples were collected by purposive sampling, namely MSMEs who plan or are using digital marketing for their marketing activities; with the Slovin formula, 397 respondents were obtained, but only 62% could be used (250). Using the SWOT analysis tool, the results of the study were obtained: IFA scored 3.95, and EFA scored 3.89. Based on QSPM, 14 strategies were obtained according to their respective priority orders, and the top 3 strategies were: utilizing e-commerce platforms, increasing marketing activities, and maximizing personal content. Implementing these priority activities will allow MSMEs to adapt to the digital ecosystem quickly. The implication is that MSMEs need to be given technical training and assistance in using digital platforms, such as creating online stores, managing transactions, conducting promotions, or analyzing data available on social media. Theoretical implications support the theory that MSME growth in the digital landscape requires more effective offensive and proactive strategies. This provides an opportunity for further research to explore the use of digital marketing in MSMEs more deeply.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; MSME; SWOT analysis; IFAS; EFAS; Social Media; North Sulawesi

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has encouraged people to shop online. Therefore, shopping electronically has become the choice of most people, even when making other transactions. This is evidenced by the large number of transactions carried out online. As drivers of economic activities, MSMEs expand their market access through accelerated digitalization and have also increased their competitiveness. Through Bank

Indonesia (2022), the government has participated by encouraging MSMEs to become more competitive. This is done through the MSME development program to expand the market, namely the MSME digitalization program. Economic growth in Indonesia in all business units has been achieved by 99%, which is the role of MSMEs. This can be seen in the achievement of 66 million business actors in 2023, who have contributed 61% of the Gross Domestic Product and absorbed 97% of the total workforce.

Meanwhile, due to the significant business capital, most MSMEs are still in the micro-class category. The problems faced by micro-businesses include being unable to absorb innovation and technology, coupled with human resources that are not yet compatible, lack of market information, and so on. Therefore, the government continues to encourage the performance of MSMEs to continue to improve through digitalization, which is expected to increase competitiveness so that they can enter the global market with export-oriented products. As many as 30 million MSME business actors are registered in Indonesia's digital ecosystem.

Table 1. MSME 2018 – 2023

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
number of MSMEs	64.19	65.47	64	65.46	65	66
Growth (%)	-	1.98%	-2.24%	2.28%	-0.70%	1.52%

Source: Kadin Indonesia, 2024

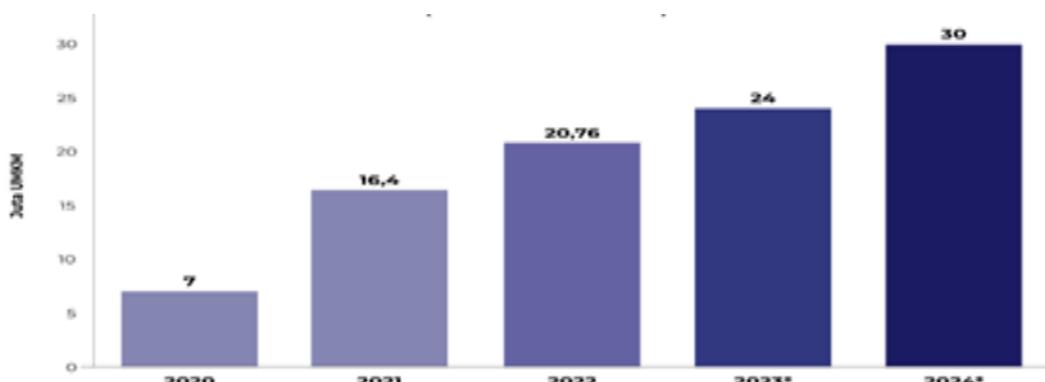


Figure 1. The number of MSMEs entering the Digital ecosystem in Indonesia
Source: Kadin Indonesia, 2024

The development of internet-based technology and very radical changes in business processes are characteristics of the development of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The integration of digital technology in business processes called the Internet of Things has become a phenomenon where the internet has become the main support for all business activities. The emergence of digital technology has made it easier to do

business activities, increasing productivity, making it more efficient, and accelerating the process of all kinds of business activities. The trend of digital technology has also brought changes in social interactions where distance and access to communicate or share information about a product have become very easy and cheap. This is because the use of social media allows its users to interact and share information indirectly but can form a virtual social bond (Savitri, (2022); Anggadwita et al., (2019)) Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a fairly central role in increasing public opinion and the economy in general, besides also absorbing and creating jobs. MSMEs in North Sulawesi have many challenges in developing their businesses, especially those related to digital technology in marketing activities and the competitiveness of their products (Ismail & Bahgia, 2021). The development trend of information and communication technology, such as digital marketing, greatly helps MSMEs optimize marketing activities and increase the competitiveness of their products. Digital marketing provides many advantages, such as opening various accesses to information to the global market so that the international market can know products.

Amid the development of information and communication technology, digital marketing has become one of the important elements that increasingly play a central role in helping MSMEs optimize the marketing of their products and services. MSMEs can utilize the full potential of digital marketing to face the needs of increasingly intelligent and advanced consumers and be competitive MSMEs in a growing market (Teuta, 2023). Digital marketing offers various advantages, such as broader access to the global market, cost efficiency, and measuring marketing campaign performance in real time. Platforms such as social media, websites, e-commerce, and search engine optimization (SEO) are now the main tools that MSMEs can use to reach new customers, retain existing customers or increase sales. Although digital marketing has developed rapidly, many North Sulawesi MSMEs still have not utilized it. There are several inhibiting factors, such as limited knowledge and skills, in how to use the tools and marketing strategies. Therefore, the ability to utilize the potential of digital marketing is not optimal. The internet can already be reached in most areas of North Sulawesi, so access to technological infrastructure is easy. However, a stable internet network and adequate devices are still challenging for MSMEs in remote areas.

Furthermore, there is still a lack of support and facilities from local governments and the private sector. These facilities, such as funding, provision of training programs, or development of digital infrastructure, are still minimal. (Deku et al., 2024). Judging from the number of MSMEs in North Sulawesi, the need for these facilities includes training and mentoring that will help MSMEs improve their digital competence. Based on the survey results, researchers found that many young people were already involved in MSME activities in villages, either as business owners inherited from their parents, owners because of their businesses, or as workers. Young people will, of course, find it very easy to adapt to technology, so this is undoubtedly the capital that will help to face the gap in the development of technology and MSMEs in the village. Market movements are running quite fast, along with the growing digital marketing trend. MSMEs that

cannot adapt to environmental changes are certainly at risk of being left behind. The use of technology, in this case, digital marketing that is not effective will result in losing opportunities to compete in the global market (Deku et al., (2024); Chinakidzwa and Phiri (2020); Cheng and Shiu (2019)). So, adaptation to market trends and opportunities is significant.

Research that examines the application of digital marketing in the context of MSMEs, in general, has been widely conducted, but specifically discussing it in the context of MSMEs in North Sulawesi has not been found. Each region has different and unique characteristics in terms of digital infrastructure, consumer behavior, and the challenges faced by MSME actors. Therefore, this study will fill this gap by understanding the local context and digital marketing practices implemented by MSME actors in North Sulawesi.

This research is expected to contribute to helping MSMEs, providing insight into specific challenges and opportunities by focusing on local factors and more applicable strategies. This research is highly relevant to supporting the development of MSMEs in North Sulawesi in facing the challenges of digitalization and strengthening their competitiveness. So that they can compete by utilizing digital marketing technology. Optimizing digital marketing for micro, small, and medium enterprises in North Sulawesi is expected to expand the market and increase profits, contributing to economic growth in North Sulawesi. Therefore, this study aims to identify internal and external factors related to digital marketing for MSMEs and analyze the potential and opportunities for using digital marketing for MSMEs in North Sulawesi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are vital to economies worldwide, driving innovation, job creation, and economic growth (Munir et al., 2022). MSMEs are businesses that have survived the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to digital marketing through participation in seminars, training, and knowledge sharing. However, MSMEs face unique challenges, including limited resources, intense competition, and rapidly evolving market dynamics. In today's digital era, digital marketing has emerged as an important tool for SMEs to overcome these challenges, increase their market presence, engage with customers, and achieve sustainable growth (Ijomah et al. (2024); Makrides (2019). Digitalization has helped SMEs adapt to market changes caused by changes in consumer behavior during the pandemic, affecting how people search for information, compare products, and make purchases and how digitalization supports business sustainability. (Artanto et al., (2020); Ismail & Bahgia, (2021); Risdwiyanto et al., (2023)) SMEs must adapt and implement digital marketing strategies to remain competitive (Risdwiyanto (2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of online shopping, presenting significant opportunities for Indonesian SMEs to develop and sustain their businesses (Redjeki, 2021). Digital marketing has a positive impact on the

business performance of SMEs in developing markets but it still faces challenges in implementing it (Deku & Wang, 2020).

Limited resources, both capital and human, using traditional marketing methods cause MSMEs to find competing challenging. Digital marketing offers a cost-effective alternative, allowing for broad market reach, building brand awareness, and driving sales activities with relatively low investment. Therefore, digital marketing is an important reason to study because it can reach a wide range of customers at a low cost and compete with larger businesses (Kano, 2022).

Social media has become an effective tool for product marketing activities. It can follow changes in consumer behavior and, in turn, will increase the economic potential of villages through the empowerment of MSMEs. However, many MSMEs have been unable to optimize social media use. Marketing development strategies through social media optimization carried out by MSMEs can increase competitiveness in the market and can also support economic growth in rural areas ((Yulia, (2020); Anggadwita et al. (2021); Ramadhan et al. (2022)). Innovative digital marketing strategies will drive competitive advantage and sustainable growth.

Digital Marketing

Information technology has entered the mainstream market and developed into a new wave of technology. Technology that enables connectivity and interactivity between groups and individuals. Economic activities based on the form of information, innovation, and creativity to expand economic potential are called digital marketing (Tapscott, 1996). In marketing practice, digital distribution channels have been implemented to reach consumers in a more effective way using computer media for product offering, payment, or delivery activities (Satyo, (2009); Tochukwu et al., (2024)). Innovative digital marketing strategies include optimizing search engines (SEO), using social media in marketing activities, content marketing, business email, and data-based analytics. By using these tools, MSMEs can compete effectively, improve overall business performance, and have market and customer engagement (Cheng and Shiu, (2019); Ijomah et al., (2024)). It is expected to attract a broad audience, turning prospects into loyal customers. Innovative digital marketing strategies are essential for MSMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) to compete effectively with larger companies. Here are some key elements of an innovative digital marketing strategy and how MSMEs can use them:

- ✓ Search Engine Optimization (SEO). SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is a technique used to increase the visibility of MSME websites in organic search results on search engines such as Google. By optimizing content, website structure for search engines, and keywords, MSMEs can attract more traffic organically without spending a lot on advertising. (Ijomah, 2024)

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- ✓ Social Media Marketing. Social media marketing provides a powerful channel for MSMEs to connect directly with customers through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Through engaging content, MSMEs can increase brand awareness and create loyal communities. Building partnerships with influencers can reach specific demographics. Social media has helped businesses gain insight into the market and how to increase intelligence. (Rosrio and Dias, (2023); Ijomah et al. (2024))
- ✓ Content Marketing. Content marketing involves creating and distributing valuable, relevant, consistent content to attract and retain target markets. This strategy helps MSMEs build customer trust. MSMEs need to find alternative ways to offset their limited resources in content creation. This strategy is very effective because it can be built around their industry and product expertise. (Kraus, et al., 2019)
- ✓ Data-Driven Analytics. Data-driven analytics allows MSMEs to understand customer behavior, evaluate promotion performance, and optimize digital marketing strategies. MSMEs can make better decisions using accurate data and target marketing efforts more efficiently. Innovative digital marketing strategies that utilize SEO, social media, content marketing, and data-driven analytics will improve customer engagement and overall business performance. Digital marketing allows MSMEs to target the right audience, build personal relationships with customers, and adapt quickly to market changes while being more cost-efficient than traditional marketing methods. Big data technology provides the most significant benefits because it allows the analysis of all types of data and disrupts decision-making (Martnez-Pelez, 2023).

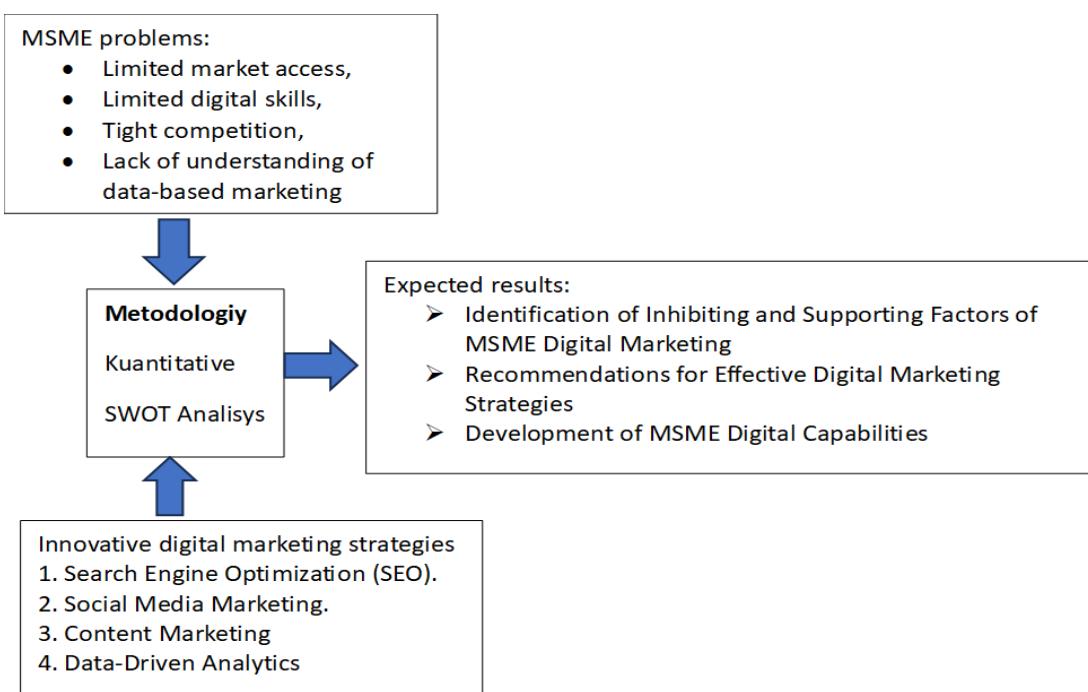


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Source: Proceed, 2024

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted on MSMEs in North Sulawesi, and the location selection was intentionally (Purposive) related to internal and external problems in MSMEs. The selection of respondents was those who were considered to know the conditions of MSMEs, both internal and external factors, played a role in formulating their business strategies, had a trade business license, and implemented digital marketing in their marketing activities. The study population was 60,961 MSMEs (BPS, 2023); the sample was taken using the Purposive Sampling method, namely MSMEs planning or already using digital marketing in their marketing activities. Using the Slovin formula, 397 respondents were obtained, but only 62% or 250 respondents could be used. Primary data was collected through questionnaires, and secondary data was collected from journals, books, and other information in this study.

Table 2. SWOT

Internal	External
Strength	Opportunity
Have an account in the marketplace	More and more people are doing online shopping
Have more than one social media account	Convenience of online payment systems
Have customers throughout Indonesia	The rapid growth of digital platforms
Have fairly complete equipment such as computers and internet packages	Access to affordable marketing tools is increasing.
Have resellers in other cities	Easier access to global markets.
UMKM owners know about IT	Increased online shopping trends.
Operational costs that are not too high	Can collaborate with local influencers
Close to customers	
Ability to target the local market	
Flexibility in decision-making	
Content creativity	
Weak	Threat
The process of sending goods through a third-party	Suppliers terminate cooperation contracts.
Does not have a special place to store products	Competitors compete by dropping prices.
Dependence on suppliers	The number of online frauds from sellers and buyers
Prices that are slightly higher than competitors	Increasingly tight competition between MSMEs and large companies
Budget constraints.	Uncontrollable changes in platform algorithms
Lack of technical expertise	Privacy issues and data regulations
Limited human resources	Fluctuations in digital advertising costs
	Dependence on technology

Source: Fitri, 2024 and data processed 2024

In addition, in-depth interviews and observations were also carried out to complete the information obtained and enrich the study's insight into the challenges and strategies of MSME digital marketing. Data analysis using IFAS, EFAS, and SWOT Matrix factor analysis techniques. This analysis is important because EFAS provides a clearer picture of external variables that influence digital marketing strategies so that more appropriate and targeted strategies can be formulated. While IFAS helps analyze internal factors that influence the implementation of strategies. This study is limited to MSMEs in North Sulawesi, so it may not be generalized to other areas or larger companies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent identification

Respondents in the study were grouped based on gender, type of business being run, and level of technology use. The number of respondents collected was 250 respondents obtained using a random method. Of the 250 respondents, 57% were male and 43% were female. 47% used technology, and 53% did not use technology. Meanwhile, based on the type of business, 45% were in the Food and Beverage sector, 20% in the creative industry, 18% in the fashion sector, and 17% in others. The food and beverage business still dominates the industry.

IFA (Internal Factor Analysis) and EFA (External Factor Analysis) Matrix Analysis

The company's internal components and relative significance are determined using the IFA matrix. The IFA matrix displays the company's internal conditions as strengths and weaknesses based on ranking and weight.

Table 3. IFA and EFA analysis results

Internal	STRENGTH	WEIGHT	RATING	SCORE
Have an account in the marketplace	0.06	4.1	0.25	
Have more than one social media account.	0.05	3.9	0.21	
Have customers throughout Indonesia	0.06	4.3	0.26	
Have fairly complete equipment such as computers and internet packages	0.06	4.2	0.25	
Have resellers in other cities	0.06	4.6	0.28	
UMKM owners know about IT	0.04	3	0.12	
Operational costs that are not too large	0.05	3.9	0.2	
Close to customers	0.06	3.8	0.23	
Ability to target local markets	0.07	3.3	0.23	

Table 3. IFA and EFA analysis results

STRENGTH	WEIGHT	RATING	SCORE
Flexibility in decision-making	0.06	4	0.24
Content creativity	0.06	4.1	0.25
TOTAL			2.52
WEAKNESS			
Budget constraints.	0.06	4.1	0.25
Lack of technical expertise	0.06	4.4	0.26
Limited human resources	0.06	4.3	0.26
Limited access to the latest technology:	0.06	4.2	0.25
Shipping process through third parties	0.06	3.7	0.22
No dedicated space to store products	0.05	3.7	0.19
Dependence on suppliers	0.05	3.7	0.19
TOTAL			1.43
TOTAL S+W			3.95
EKSTERNAL			
More and more people are doing online shopping	0.07	4	0.28
Convenience of online payment systems	0.07	5	0.35
The rapid growth of digital platforms	0.07	4	0.28
Access to affordable marketing tools is increasing.	0.07	4	0.28
Easier access to global markets.	0.06	4	0.24
Increased online shopping trends.	0.07	4	0.28
Can collaborate with local influencers	0.06	4	0.34
TOTAL			2.05
THREAT			
Suppliers terminate cooperation contracts	0.07	4	0.28
Competitors compete by lowering prices	0.07	4	0.28
The number of online frauds from both sellers and buyers	0.07	4	0.28
Uncontrollable changes in platform algorithms	0.06	4	0.24
Privacy issues and data regulations	0.07	4	0.28
Fluctuations in digital advertising costs	0.06	4	0.24
Dependence on technology	0.06	4	0.24
TOTAL			1.84
TOTAL O+T			3.89

Source: Data processed 2024

The main opportunities that MSMEs can utilize in North Sulawesi are the strength of having resellers in other cities with a value of 0.28. and so on. Finally, the strength is the knowledge of MSMEs about IT, with a value of 0.12. while from the weaknesses, the highest is lack of technical expertise (0.29), and the lowest is storage space and dependence on suppliers (0.19). Of the opportunities obtained, the highest number was in ease of online payment (0.35) and the lowest access to the global market (0.24). The highest challenge (0.28) is the supplier breaking the contract, competitors, online fraud, privacy issues, and data regulations. The lowest challenge (0.24) is uncontrollable changes in platform algorithms, privacy issues, data regulations flu, fluctuations in digital advertising costs, and dependence on technology.

Table 4. SWOT Matrix Analysis and Strategies

		Strength - S	Weakness -W
INTERNAL	1	Have an account in the marketplace	1 Budget constraints.
	2	Have more than one social media account.	2 Lack of technical expertise
EKSTERNAL	3	Have customers throughout Indonesia	3 Limited human resources
	4	Have fairly complete equipment such as computers and internet packages	4 Limited access to the latest technology:
	5	Have resellers in other cities	5 Shipping process through third parties
	6	UMKM owners know about IT	6 No dedicated space to store products
	7	Operational costs are not too high	7 Dependence on suppliers
	8	Close to customers	
	9	Ability to target local markets	
	10	Flexibility in decision-making	
	11	Content creativity	

Table 4. SWOT Matrix Analysis and Strategies

Opportunity – O		Strategy – SO	Strategy - ST
1	More and more people are doing online shopping	1 Improve marketing activities with S1, S2, S4, S6, O1, O2, O3, O4, O5, O6, O7	1 Diversifying Marketing Channels to ensure optimal reach using W1, W2, W3, W4, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5
2	Convenience of online payment systems	2 Utilize e-commerce platforms using O1, O2, O4, S1, S2, S3, S5, S9,	
3	The rapid growth of digital platforms	3	Using cultural values and product uniqueness as differentiators with W3, W4, T4, T2
4	Access to affordable marketing tools is increasing.	4 Maximize personal content using O6, O7, S2, S3, S11,	
5	Easier access to global markets.	5 Analytical data can be used on social media or websites to understand consumer needs and market trends with S8, S10, S7, O4, and O5. O6, O7	Building customer trust and ensuring compliance with data protection rules with W4, W5, T2, T3, T4, T5
6	Increased online shopping trends.		
7	Can collaborate with local influencers		
Treat – T		Strategy- ST	Strategy - WT
1	Suppliers terminate cooperation contracts	Train MSME owners and employees to improve digital skills in S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, T3, T2, T1, T7, and T4.	Creating a loyal customer base W1, W3, W4, T3, T4, T5
2	Competitors compete by lowering prices.		
3	The number of online frauds from both sellers and buyers	Collaborate with micro-influencers or digital marketing agencies to help market products S7, S8, S9, T1, T2, T3.	Stock management to meet demand with competitive quality W5, W6, W7, T1, T2, T3,
4	Uncontrollable changes in platform algorithms		
5	Privacy issues and data regulations	Utilize low-cost digital tools with S4, S6, S9, S10, T6, T7, T2,	Budget efficiency in digital marketing W1, W5, W6, W7, T1, T2, T3, T6, T7
6	Fluctuations in digital advertising costs		
7	Dependence on technology		

Source: Data processed 2024

Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM)

Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) is a strategic analysis tool used to evaluate and determine the best strategic options based on internal and external factors. QSPM aims to help organizations prioritize strategies in an objective and measurable manner, using input from Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. These factors are sorted and weighted based on their impact on the success of the strategy; then, each strategy option is scored to indicate its feasibility, and then each strategy is calculated for an Attractive Score (AS) and Total Attractive Score (TAS). This process allows organizations, including MSMEs, to make more focused and effective decisions to achieve their business goals. QSPM is also the final stage in formulating a strategy.

Table 5. Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM)

1	9,35	Leverage e-commerce platforms using O1, O2, O4, S1, S2, S3, S5, S9,
2	9,17	Enhance marketing activities with S1, S2, S4, S6, O1, O2, O3, O4, o5, O6, O7
3	8,83	Maximize personalized content using O6, O7, S2, S3, S11,
4	8,81	Analytical data can be used on social media or websites to understand consumer needs and market trends with S8, S10, S7, O4, and O5. O6, o7
5	8,78	Maintaining good relationships with customers by paying attention to O5, O6,
6	8,7	Providing training to MSME owners and employees to improve digital skills S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, T3, T2, T1, T7, T4
7	8,57	Collaborating with micro-influencers or digital marketing agencies to help market products S7, S8, S9, T1, T2, T3
8	8,57	Utilizing low-cost digital tools with S4, S6, S9, S10, T6, T7, T2,
9	8,56	Diversifying Marketing Channels to ensure optimal reach using W1, W2, W3, W4, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5
10	8,54	Using cultural values and product uniqueness as differentiators with W3, W4, T4, T2
11	8,5	Building customer trust and ensuring compliance with data protection rules with W4, W5, T2, T3, T4, T5
12	8,43	Creating a loyal customer base W1, W3, W4, T3, T4, T5
13	7,91	Stock management to meet demand with competitive quality W5, W6, W7, T1, T2, T3,
14	7,76	Budget efficiency in digital marketing W1, W5, W6, W7, T1, T2, T3, T6, T7

Source: Data processed 2024

CONCLUSION

The order above shows the importance that must be implemented immediately, namely that the first 3 of the 14 strategies offered should be implemented first by MSMEs in North Sulawesi, namely utilizing e-commerce platforms, increasing marketing activities, and maximizing personal content. There are several reasons why it needs to be implemented immediately. Namely, using e-commerce platforms allows MSMEs to reach more consumers without geographical limitations. Using e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Bukalapak, or Shopee allows MSMEs to sell their products more easily and cheaply. It can even reduce the distribution and logistics barriers faced. Integration between the right technology and good online store management is the key to the success of this strategy. Second, increasing digital marketing activities will strengthen the brand's position in the eyes of consumers.

Building trust by increasing consumer interaction with MSMEs will, in turn, achieve consumer loyalty. This strategy utilizes various variables related to digital marketing. The use of digital marketing channels, such as social media, is well-known by MSMEs in North Sulawesi. Increasing knowledge and use of email marketing and SEO can help increase reach and attract the attention of more consumers. This can be done by paying attention to market segmentation, proper content planning, and utilizing social media to build better customer interactions and long-term relationships through consistent communication. The last is to maximize the use of personal content. Personal content-based marketing is an effective strategy for building emotional relationships with customers. Using a more personal approach can increase customer engagement and loyalty. Social media and platforms such as Instagram or Facebook are perfect for this type of content. Content that is relevant, authentic, and by the needs and interests of the audience can make MSME products stand out in a competitive market. After implementing these three strategies, it is hoped that they will accelerate the adaptation of MSMEs to the digital ecosystem, reach a broader market, and build closer relationships with consumers (Purnomo, 2023). After the three main strategies are implemented, the following can be continued until all strategies are implemented.

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