Digital Marketing and E-Commerce Integration to Improve MSME Sales and Business Competitiveness

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Abstract
Purpose: This study aims to examine the role of digital marketing and e-commerce in supporting the sales performance and business competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. It specifically analyzes the contribution of digital marketing to brand awareness and sales growth, the role of e-commerce in expanding market reach, and the benefits of integrating both strategies in digital business development.
Methodology/approach: This study employs a literature review with a qualitative descriptive approach. Secondary data were collected from scientific journals and relevant academic publications through Google Scholar, focusing on studies published between 2021 and 2026. The selected literature was analyzed through thematic categorization, comparison of previous research findings, and descriptive synthesis.
Results/findings: The findings indicate that digital marketing supports product visibility, brand awareness, and customer engagement, while e-commerce facilitates online transactions and expands market access. Integrating both strategies creates opportunities to connect promotional activities with purchasing processes. However, their effectiveness depends on digital literacy, customer trust, platform management, service quality, and business resources. Limited digital skills and financial constraints remain significant challenges for MSMEs.
Limitations: This study relies on secondary data from published literature and does not involve direct empirical observation or primary data collection from MSME owners.
Contribution: This study provides an integrated understanding of digital marketing and e-commerce as complementary strategies and offers practical insights for developing sustainable digital business strategies to strengthen MSME sales performance and competitiveness in Indonesia.

Keyword: *MSMEs, digital transformation, digital marketing, e-commerce, sales performance***.**

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in Indonesia's economic development by contributing to economic growth, generating income, and creating jobs. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, Indonesia has approximately 65 million MSME units. Together, they contribute around 61% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and account for approximately 97% of national employment. As the economy and technology have developed, businesses have increasingly moved from conventional practices to digital platforms, particularly the internet, social media, and e-commerce. Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2025) reported that 72.78% of Indonesia's population accessed the internet in 2024, up from 69.21% in 2023. The number of e-commerce businesses also rose by 15.30% in 2024 compared to the previous year. These trends create significant opportunities for MSMEs to reach wider markets, engage more effectively with customers, and strengthen their competitiveness. Digital transformation is therefore increasingly important for helping MSMEs adapt to changing consumer behavior and market conditions.

Despite these opportunities, MSMEs continue to face challenges in adopting digital technology. One major obstacle is limited digital literacy among business owners, which can hinder their ability to use technology effectively for business development and marketing. Patria et al. (2023) found that digital technology, digital literacy, and digital marketing positively influence the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in Bekasi. Raharjo et al. (2024) likewise emphasize the importance of digital literacy in supporting business transformation among small enterprises in Indonesia. These findings suggest that access to technology alone is not enough to ensure successful transformation. MSME owners also need appropriate digital skills, effective marketing strategies, and an understanding of consumer behavior. Without these capabilities, businesses may struggle to develop effective promotions, reach potential customers, and compete in the digital marketplace.

Digital marketing can help MSMEs overcome the limitations of conventional marketing and connect with a wider consumer base. Through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, business owners can introduce products, communicate with potential customers, and build brand awareness with relatively flexible promotional costs. Research on Salad Alvi MSME by Nur et al. (2023) shows that social media use can strengthen brand awareness. Paputungan et al. (2023) similarly explain that digital marketing across online channels can support brand awareness and business competitiveness. However, effectiveness depends on more than the number of platforms used. It also requires relevant promotional content, suitable platform choices, consistent communication, and a clear understanding of target consumers. A strategic approach helps ensure that promotions do more than increase product visibility: they can also encourage consumer interest and purchasing decisions.

E-commerce also plays an important role by simplifying the purchasing process and supporting MSME operations. Platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop allow business owners to display product information and prices, receive orders, process payments, and manage distribution online. As a result, MSMEs can reach consumers beyond their immediate geographical areas without relying entirely on physical storefronts. Sahrul and Nuringsih (2023) found that e-commerce, social media, and digital transformation contribute to improved MSME performance. However, digital marketing may have limited impact if consumers cannot easily complete a purchase. For instance, someone who discovers a product on TikTok may lose interest if product details, prices, ordering instructions, and transaction links are unclear. Integrating digital marketing with e-commerce can connect promotions to a convenient purchasing process and create more opportunities to convert interest into sales.

Previous studies have examined how digital marketing and e-commerce contribute to MSME development from different perspectives. In a systematic literature review of 19 articles published between 2019 and 2024, Sandiva and Veri (2024) found that digital marketing supports brand awareness, consumer engagement, and sales conversion. Amalia (2024) discussed e-commerce adoption as part of digital marketing strategies to support MSME sales. Other research, including studies by Patria et al. (2023) and Sahrul and Nuringsih (2023), also highlights the role of digital technology and online platforms in improving business performance. While these studies offer valuable insights into the benefits of digitalization, more research is needed on how digital marketing activities and e-commerce transaction facilities work together to support sales performance and business competitiveness. In particular, the links between promotional activities, consumer purchasing processes, and the challenges MSMEs face warrant a more integrated discussion. This points to the need to examine digital marketing and e-commerce as complementary strategies rather than separate business activities.

In response to this research gap, this study reviews previous findings to examine how digital marketing and e-commerce support the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. Specifically, it analyzes digital marketing's contribution to brand awareness and sales growth, examines how e-commerce expands market reach and facilitates online transactions, and explores how combining the two can strengthen business competitiveness. The study also identifies key challenges in adopting digital technology and discusses strategies MSMEs can apply in light of their resources and digital readiness. Rather than focusing on digital marketing or e-commerce in isolation, this study emphasizes how promotional activities and transaction facilities complement each other in

supporting MSME development. The findings are expected to deepen understanding of digital transformation and offer practical insights for MSME owners and relevant stakeholders seeking to develop effective, inclusive, and sustainable digital business strategies.

2. Literature Review

In the context of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), digital transformation is the process of reshaping business activities through the use of digital technology, encompassing areas such as operations, marketing, resource management, and customer interaction. The success of digital transformation depends not only on the availability of the right technology but also on the readiness of human resources and the ability of business owners to utilize that technology effectively. Kusumawati and Saputri (2023) explain that digital skills and digital readiness are crucial factors supporting the digital transformation of SMEs. Meanwhile, Salam and Imilda (2024) indicate that the adoption of digital technology can help small businesses expand their markets and enhance their competitiveness, despite persistent challenges such as limited infrastructure, resources, and digital literacy. These studies suggest that digital transformation entails more than just the implementation of technology; it also requires a business to be prepared to integrate such technology into its daily operations. Thus, digital transformation serves as a foundation for small businesses, enabling them to improve their adaptability, operate more efficiently, and grow in the face of changes within the digital economy.

Digital marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes digital media and technology—such as social media, websites, and advertising platforms—to introduce products and reach a broader audience. It enables MSME (micro, small, and medium enterprise) owners to share product information, communicate with customers, and tailor promotions to meet market needs. In their 2023 study, Saputra, Rif'ah, and Andrianto examined the use of digital marketing as a strategy to enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. Their findings indicate that digital marketing can effectively promote and facilitate the sale of business products. This is supported by Solikhati et al. (2023), who explain that integrating digital marketing with e-commerce can expand the reach of marketing efforts and strengthen business competitiveness. While both studies underscore the importance of digital marketing for the growth of small businesses, they highlight different facets, such as promotional activities and the integration of marketing with e-commerce. This suggests that the success of digital marketing depends not merely on the use of digital media, but also on a business's ability to effectively manage its communication and promotional strategies. Consequently, digital marketing serves as a viable approach for small and medium-sized enterprises to improve market access, attract consumer interest, and drive sales growth.

E-commerce, or electronic commerce, refers to the activity of selling goods and services using electronic technology and the internet—encompassing everything from marketing, ordering, and payment to the entire transaction process. The adoption of e-commerce provides small businesses with the opportunity to reach customers without being constrained by physical location or the operating hours of a brick-and-mortar store. In their research on the digital transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia, Jambi et al. (2024) explain that the use of e-commerce can help expand a business's customer base and improve its overall performance. Meanwhile, (Uum Helmina Chaerunisak et al., 2021) discuss the role of business digitalization and financial inclusion in enhancing the performance of SMEs through the implementation of e-commerce. Both studies demonstrate that e-commerce is not merely a method for conducting transactions, but also a tool for developing business activities. Expanded market access allows products from small businesses to reach a wider range of consumers, while the convenience of transactions helps increase the likelihood of purchases. Nevertheless, its successful implementation requires technological readiness, platform management skills, and the provision of quality customer service. Ultimately, e-commerce can help improve operational efficiency, broaden product distribution, and create opportunities for small businesses to increase their sales.

Sales refers to business activities that involve offering and exchanging goods or services with consumers to generate revenue. In the context of the evolving digital business landscape, sales growth is influenced not only by product quality and price but also by a business owner's ability to leverage

marketing technology to shape consumer purchasing decisions. Through digital marketing, small business owners can introduce their products, share information, build trust, and attract customers across various digital platforms. Easy access to information and promotional content helps customers evaluate products before making a purchase. This relationship is supported by research conducted by(Harini et al., 2021), which indicates that the use of digital marketing via social media can help increase sales volume for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the city of Semarang. Similarly, (Harini et al., 2021) explain that implementing digital marketing can enhance the competitiveness of SMEs by broadening the reach of their promotions and improving communication with consumers. Both studies highlight a connection between digital marketing efforts and increased sales, albeit with different areas of focus. Digital marketing helps capture attention and generate consumer interest, while the actual purchasing decision serves as the link between promotional activities and the final transaction. Therefore, employing the right digital marketing strategy—one tailored to the specific characteristics of the market—can help small businesses increase the likelihood of purchases, the number of transactions, and overall business revenue.

The competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) refers to a business's capacity to sustain its operations and navigate competition by leveraging its inherent strengths. In the context of MSMEs, competitiveness can be assessed through several dimensions, including product quality, operational efficiency, innovation, customer service, and marketing strategy. Product quality reflects how effectively a business meets customer needs and expectations, while operational efficiency indicates how well it manages costs, time, and resources. Innovation pertains to the development of new products or business processes, and customer service fosters satisfaction and trust. Marketing strategies enable businesses to reach a broader audience and enhance their ability to attract consumers. In the evolving digital economy, this competitiveness is further bolstered by an MSME's capacity to utilize technology. Kusumawati and Saputri (2023) found that digital skills and e-readiness have a positive and significant impact on the digital transformation of MSMEs. Meanwhile, Jambi et al. (2024) explain that the adoption of e-commerce and digital marketing as part of a digital transformation can help expand market access and improve operational efficiency. Both studies demonstrate that digital readiness and the use of technology are linked to an MSME's ability to compete in the marketplace. Ultimately, competitiveness is not merely about offering an excellent product; it also encompasses a business's ability to manage its operations effectively, generate new ideas, provide high-quality service, and utilize digital technology efficiently.

3. Method

This study employs a literature review method with a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of digital marketing and e-commerce in improving the sales performance and business competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. This method was selected to analyze and understand previous research findings related to the implementation of digital marketing and e-commerce in supporting MSME development. The data used in this study are secondary data obtained from scientific journals, research articles, and other relevant academic publications.

The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar as the primary academic database. The search focused on publications from the last five years (2021–2026) to obtain relevant and up-to-date information. Keywords used in the literature search included “digital transformation,” “digital marketing,” “e-commerce,” “MSME sales performance,” and “business competitiveness.” These keywords were selected based on the main concepts and objectives of the study.

The literature selection was based on several criteria. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) scientific publications published between 2021 and 2026; (2) studies discussing digital marketing, e-commerce, or digital transformation in MSMEs; (3) publications examining their relationship with sales performance or business competitiveness; and (4) publications providing relevant information and research findings. Meanwhile, publications that were unrelated to the research topic, did not address the research objectives, or lacked sufficient information were excluded from the analysis.

The data analysis was conducted through several stages. First, relevant publications were identified based on the research topic and objectives. Second, the selected literature was categorized into several main themes, including digital marketing implementation, e-commerce utilization, sales performance, business competitiveness, and challenges in digital transformation. Third, the findings from different studies were compared to identify similarities, differences, and relationships among the research results. Finally, the findings were synthesized descriptively to draw conclusions regarding the contribution of digital marketing and e-commerce to MSME development.

Through these stages, this study not only summarizes previous research but also examines the relationship between digital marketing and e-commerce, identifies the challenges faced by MSMEs in adopting digital technologies, and explores strategies that can support their sales performance and business competitiveness. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively to provide a broader understanding of the opportunities and limitations of digital transformation among MSMEs in Indonesia.

4. Result and Discussion

Digital marketing has become an important strategy for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to increase product visibility, strengthen brand awareness, and attract potential customers. Through social media and other digital platforms, business owners can introduce their products, communicate with consumers, and conduct promotional activities beyond the limitations of conventional marketing methods. Research conducted by Nur et al. (2023) on Salad Alvi MSME demonstrated that the utilization of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp contributed to strengthening brand awareness. This finding indicates that social media provides MSMEs with accessible promotional channels to introduce their products and establish communication with a wider audience.

However, increased brand awareness does not necessarily lead to higher sales. Although Nur et al. (2023) highlighted the contribution of social media to product recognition, purchasing decisions are also influenced by customer trust, product quality, competitive pricing, and service quality. This distinction demonstrates that the effectiveness of digital marketing should not be evaluated solely through audience reach, views, or engagement rates. Instead, promotional activities need to be assessed based on their ability to generate customer inquiries, encourage purchasing decisions, and maintain repeat transactions. Consequently, digital marketing becomes more effective when promotional content is supported by accurate product information, consistent communication, and attractive offers that encourage consumers to make purchases.

These findings suggest that digital marketing contributes to MSME sales development through a gradual process, beginning with product recognition, followed by consumer interest, trust formation, and purchasing decisions. Therefore, MSME owners need to develop promotional strategies that focus not only on attracting consumer attention but also on building relationships and encouraging actual purchasing behavior. The ability to connect promotional activities with consumer needs becomes an important factor in transforming digital visibility into business opportunities.

E-commerce provides MSMEs with opportunities to display products, receive orders, process payments, and conduct transactions through digital platforms. Compared with relying exclusively on physical stores, online selling channels enable businesses to reach consumers beyond their immediate geographical areas. Rahmawati et al. (2025), through a literature review involving 23 academic publications published between 2013 and 2024, examined the factors influencing e-commerce adoption and its relationship with MSME business performance in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Wijayanto et al. (2024), using survey data from 150 Indonesian MSMEs, identified positive relationships between e-commerce adoption, market reach, and business competitiveness. These studies provide complementary perspectives. Rahmawati et al. (2025) offer a broader understanding of the factors associated with e-commerce adoption, while Wijayanto et al. (2024) provide empirical evidence regarding its relationship with market expansion and competitiveness.

The findings indicate that e-commerce can support business development by reducing geographical limitations and providing consumers with more convenient access to products. Through online platforms, MSMEs can display product information, compare their offerings with competitors, and serve customers from different locations. These opportunities can help smaller businesses compete in markets that were previously difficult to access through conventional sales channels. Nevertheless, wider market access does not automatically guarantee improved business performance. The benefits of e-commerce depend on the ability of business owners to manage product listings, maintain accurate stock information, respond to customer inquiries, and provide reliable delivery and after-sales services. Furthermore, limited digital skills and operational resources may prevent some MSMEs from managing online platforms effectively. Poor product information, delayed responses, and unreliable delivery services can reduce customer satisfaction despite the availability of wider market opportunities. This demonstrates that e-commerce adoption should not be viewed merely as the process of registering a business on a marketplace. Instead, it requires effective product management, responsive customer service, and reliable transaction procedures. Therefore, the contribution of e-commerce to business competitiveness depends not only on market accessibility but also on the ability of MSMEs to maintain service quality and manage their online operations consistently.

The integration of digital marketing and e-commerce offers MSMEs a more comprehensive approach to digital business development. Digital marketing focuses on attracting potential customers through promotional content, social media interactions, and brand communication, whereas e-commerce provides facilities for product exploration, ordering, payment, and transaction completion. The findings of Wijayanto et al. (2024) support the importance of digital strategies by identifying positive relationships between digital marketing, business competitiveness, e-commerce adoption, and market reach. These findings suggest that digital marketing and e-commerce contribute to different but interconnected aspects of business development. Digital marketing helps generate consumer awareness and interest, while e-commerce provides the facilities needed to convert that interest into purchasing transactions.

The relationship between these strategies can be illustrated through an MSME selling clothing products. Business owners can use Instagram or TikTok to introduce new collections, share product information, and attract potential customers. Interested consumers can then be directed to an online store to examine product details, compare prices, and complete their purchases. Through this process, promotional activities become connected with accessible transaction facilities, creating a more convenient customer purchasing journey. Business owners can also evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy by monitoring product views, customer inquiries, order conversion rates, and repeat purchases.

Compared with implementing these strategies separately, their integration provides opportunities to connect promotional activities with actual purchasing processes. Digital marketing without accessible purchasing facilities may generate consumer interest without producing sufficient transactions. Conversely, e-commerce platforms without effective promotional activities may have difficulty attracting potential customers. This comparison demonstrates why both strategies need to be managed as complementary components of digital business development.

However, integration does not automatically guarantee increased revenue or stronger competitiveness. Its effectiveness depends on promotional content quality, platform selection, transaction convenience, customer experience, and the business owner's ability to evaluate business performance. For instance, attractive promotional content may generate customer interest, but complicated ordering procedures or unreliable delivery services can discourage consumers from completing their purchases. Therefore, MSMEs need to establish a coordinated digital strategy that connects product promotion, customer communication, and reliable transaction facilities. The main contribution of this integration lies in its ability to connect customer acquisition with purchasing processes, rather than simply increasing the number of digital platforms used by businesses.

Despite the potential benefits of digital marketing and e-commerce, MSMEs continue to face various challenges in implementing digital business strategies. These challenges include limited digital literacy,

insufficient skills in creating promotional content, difficulties in managing multiple platforms, and constraints in financial and human resources. A systematic literature review by Wahyudi et al. (2026), which examined 12 international articles published between 2024 and 2026, emphasized the importance of customer engagement in developing brand loyalty, expanding markets, and strengthening competitive advantage. The review also identified limited digital literacy and technical competence as barriers to effective digital technology adoption. These findings indicate that the availability of digital platforms alone is insufficient to ensure successful digital transformation.

The challenges experienced by MSMEs may differ depending on their technological capabilities, financial resources, and operational readiness. Businesses with limited digital skills may experience difficulties in maintaining consistent promotional activities, managing online transactions, and responding to changing consumer preferences. Financial limitations may also restrict their ability to invest in digital advertising, technological infrastructure, and employee development. These conditions help explain why the implementation of digital marketing and e-commerce may produce different outcomes among MSMEs. Businesses that have access to digital platforms but lack the necessary knowledge and operational capabilities may not obtain the same benefits as businesses that can manage these technologies effectively.

To address these challenges, MSMEs need practical and gradual support in adopting digital technologies. Digital marketing training can improve business owners' ability to create relevant promotional content and understand consumer behavior. Assistance in managing online stores can help them organize product information, maintain stock accuracy, and improve customer service. In addition, simple digital sales records can support business owners in monitoring transactions, evaluating promotional effectiveness, and identifying customer purchasing patterns. For MSMEs with limited financial resources, the adoption of accessible digital tools and the gradual development of online business activities can be more realistic than immediately investing in complex technologies.

These strategies demonstrate that digital transformation should be adjusted to the resources, operational requirements, and digital readiness of each business. Therefore, successful digital transformation requires not only technology adoption but also improvements in human resource capabilities, customer management, and business operations. Providing practical support and developing digital skills are essential steps in helping MSMEs utilize digital marketing and e-commerce more effectively.

Based on the findings discussed above, digital marketing and e-commerce can be understood as complementary strategies in supporting MSME development and competitiveness. Digital marketing contributes to increasing product visibility, building brand awareness, and attracting potential customers, while e-commerce facilitates the purchasing process through accessible product information and transaction services. The integration of these strategies creates opportunities to connect promotional activities with actual purchasing behavior. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this integration is influenced by digital literacy, operational management, customer trust, and the availability of business resources.

The discussion also indicates that the adoption of digital platforms does not automatically lead to increased sales or sustainable business growth. Digital marketing may generate consumer awareness without necessarily producing purchases, while e-commerce may expand market access without guaranteeing customer satisfaction or business performance. These findings highlight the importance of managing promotional activities and transaction facilities as interconnected business processes. MSMEs must therefore pay attention not only to attracting customers but also to maintaining product quality, providing reliable customer services, and evaluating business performance.

The main contribution of this study is its synthesis of digital marketing and e-commerce as interconnected strategies rather than independent digital business tools. Their effectiveness depends on how promotional activities, customer engagement, purchasing facilities, and operational capabilities are managed together. Consequently, MSME digital transformation should be implemented through an integrated and gradual approach that considers the capabilities and needs of each business. This

understanding provides a basis for developing more effective digital business strategies to support sales opportunities and strengthen MSME competitiveness in an increasingly digital business environment.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, e-commerce and digital marketing complement each other in helping Indonesia's Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Businesses (MSMEs) grow. Through social media and other digital channels, digital marketing assists MSMEs in raising product visibility, developing brand awareness, and drawing in new clients. E-commerce, on the other hand, makes it easier for customers to obtain goods and services, increases market reach, and streamlines online transactions.

The results show that by linking promotional activities with practical purchase procedures, integrating digital marketing and e-commerce can enhance MSME business performance. While e-commerce makes it easier for potential customers to complete purchases, digital marketing helps spark consumer enthusiasm. However, the quality of promotional content, customer service, platform management, and the capacity to comprehend customer needs all play a role in the efficacy of these tactics in addition to technological adoption.

Despite these prospects, MSMEs nevertheless have to deal with a number of issues, such as low levels of digital literacy, a lack of expertise in producing promotional content, obstacles in managing digital platforms, and limitations in human and financial resources. These difficulties show that proper knowledge, skills, and business management competencies are just as important to digital transformation as having access to technology.

MSME owners are therefore urged to develop their digital skills, provide consistent and pertinent promotional content, choose digital platforms that align with their target audiences, and uphold dependable online transaction and customer support procedures. It's also critical to have support from pertinent stakeholders through enhanced digital infrastructure, mentoring, and digital training. In general, when applied in accordance with business requirements and available resources, the integration of digital marketing and e-commerce can become a successful approach for enhancing MSME sales performance and business competitiveness.

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