

THE FORCE AWAKENS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON SMES CONTEXT IN MAKASSAR (A CASE STUDY APPROACH)

*The Force Awakens: Peran Media Sosial di Konteks Usaha Kecil dan Menengah di
Makassar (Sebuah Pendekatan Studi Kasus)*

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Abstract

This research examines the role of social media marketing in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Makassar, Indonesia, employing a case study approach to provide an in-depth understanding of its impact. As the digital landscape evolves, SMEs are increasingly turning to social media platforms to enhance their marketing strategies, engage with customers, and promote their products and services. This study analyses various SMEs across different sectors in Makassar to identify the benefits and challenges associated with social media marketing. The findings reveal that social media marketing significantly contributes to increased brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales growth for SMEs. Businesses that effectively utilize platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter report improved customer relationships and greater market reach. However, challenges such as limited digital literacy, resource constraints, and heightened competition hinder the effective implementation of social media strategies. This research highlights the need for targeted training programs to enhance digital skills among SME owners and employees, enabling them to leverage social media marketing more effectively. By providing insights into best practices and strategies, this study aims to assist SMEs in Makassar in optimizing their social media marketing efforts, ultimately contributing to their growth and sustainability in a competitive marketplace.

Keywords: social media, SME, marketing strategy, marketing management, case study

Abstrak

Studi ini menganalisis berbagai UKM di berbagai sektor di Makassar untuk mengidentifikasi manfaat dan tantangan yang terkait dengan pemasaran media sosial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran media sosial secara signifikan berkontribusi pada peningkatan kesadaran merek, keterlibatan pelanggan, dan pertumbuhan penjualan untuk UKM. Bisnis yang secara efektif memanfaatkan platform seperti Facebook, Instagram, dan Twitter melaporkan peningkatan hubungan dengan pelanggan dan jangkauan pasar yang lebih luas. Namun, tantangan seperti literasi digital yang terbatas, keterbatasan sumber daya, dan persaingan yang semakin ketat menghambat implementasi strategi media sosial yang efektif. Penelitian ini menyoroti perlunya program pelatihan yang ditargetkan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan digital di antara pemilik dan karyawan UKM, sehingga mereka dapat memanfaatkan pemasaran media sosial secara lebih efektif. Dengan memberikan wawasan tentang praktik dan strategi terbaik, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membantu UKM di Makassar dalam mengoptimalkan upaya pemasaran media sosial mereka, yang pada akhirnya berkontribusi pada pertumbuhan dan keberlanjutan mereka di pasar yang kompetitif.

Kata kunci: media sosial, UKM, strategi pemasaran, manajemen pemasaran, studi kasus

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital technology has transformed marketing practices worldwide, particularly in developing regions. In Makassar, a vibrant city in Indonesia, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly reliant on social media marketing to promote

their brands and engage with customers (Chen et al., 2021; Mustafa et al., 2018). This report aims to analyse the role of social media marketing for SMEs in Makassar through a comprehensive literature review. Furthermore, SMEs play a crucial role in Makassar's economy, contributing significantly to employment and local economic growth. According to the Indonesian Statistics Agency, SMEs account for over 90% of businesses in the region. Understanding how these enterprises can effectively utilize social media marketing is essential for enhancing their competitiveness and sustainability.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Social media marketing, or SMM, encompasses various strategies employed by businesses to promote their products and services through social media platforms (Mason et al., 2021; Musa et al., 2019). According some scholars (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kotler et al., 2006; Kotler et al., 2018), there are 2 key components of SMM, namely:

- (1) Content creation and sharing; refer to the process of producing and distributing various forms of digital material-such as text, images, videos, and graphics-across different platforms, particularly social media. This practice is essential for engaging audiences, building brand awareness, and promoting products or services. Types of Content, are: (a) Text-Based: Blog posts, articles, social media updates, and newsletters; (b) Visual: Images, infographics, and illustrations; (c) Video: Tutorials, promotional videos, live streams, and vlogs; (d) Audio: Podcasts and audio clips. The creation processes are also divided into several steps, which are: Ideation, which means generating ideas based on audience interests, trends, and business goals; Production, which covers content development using appropriate tools and platforms (e.g., graphic design software, video editing tools); Optimization, which refers to the content improvement for specific platforms, including using relevant keywords, hashtags, and formats.
- (2) Community engagement; refers to the activities of trust building and authentication, such as personal connection and transparency. Community engagement also covers a loyalty level improvement especially (a) the emotional investment, that explains when followers feel heard and valued, they are more likely to develop loyalty to the influencer. This emotional bond leads to long-term support; and (b) brand advocacy, which describes that loyal followers often become brand advocates, promoting the influencer's content and offerings within their own networks.

The Benefit of SMM for SMEs

Subsequently, according to the literature (Kotler et al., 2018; Mustafa, 2023; Mustafa et al., 2018; Zollo et al., 2020), there are 4 main benefits of SMM for SMEs, which are: (1) Cost-Effectiveness: Social media marketing is generally more affordable than traditional marketing methods, making it accessible for SMEs with limited budgets. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram offer free account options, allowing businesses to reach their target audience without substantial financial investment; (2) Enhanced Brand Awareness: Social media platforms provide SMEs with the opportunity to increase brand visibility. By regularly posting engaging content, businesses can attract followers and build a recognizable online presence; (c) Customer Engagement: Social media allows for direct interaction between businesses and consumers. This real-time engagement fosters relationships, encourages customer feedback, and builds loyalty; and (d) Market Insight: Social media analytics provide valuable data on customer preferences and behaviours, helping SMEs refine their marketing strategies and product offerings.

Challenges Faced by SMEs in Social Media Marketing

Despite the benefits of SMM for SMEs, which are explained earlier, SMEs in Makassar encounter several challenges: (1) Limited Digital Literacy: Many SME owners lack the skills

to effectively manage social media accounts and create engaging content; (2) Resource Constraints: Smaller businesses often have limited personnel and time to dedicate to social media marketing efforts; and (3) Intense Competition: As more SMEs adopt social media marketing, standing out in a crowded digital space becomes increasingly difficult (Evans et al., 2021; Jacobson et al., 2020).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which emphasizes understanding the experiences and perspectives of individuals rather than relying solely on numerical data (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The primary method employed is a comprehensive literature review, where existing research, case studies, and theoretical frameworks related to social media marketing in SMEs are systematically examined. The focus of this research is specifically directed towards 6 research samples, which are SMEs located in Makassar, a significant urban centre in Indonesia, with a research period from May 2024 to December 2024. By honing in on this geographical area, the study aims to uncover unique insights and trends that may be specific to the local business environment and cultural context.

Furthermore, to gather relevant information, a variety of academic sources were scrutinized, including peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, and industry reports (Akbar et al., 2024; Amran et al., 2024). These sources provide a robust foundation of existing knowledge regarding how SMEs leverage social media for marketing purposes. The analysis of these materials allows the researcher to identify best practices, challenges, and opportunities that SMEs in Makassar face in their social media marketing efforts. The qualitative nature of this research enables a deeper exploration of the nuances and complexities surrounding social media strategies employed by these businesses. By synthesizing insights from multiple studies and case examples, the research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role that social media plays in the marketing landscape for SMEs in Makassar.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the vibrant landscape of Makassar, several small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have strategically leveraged social media marketing to enhance their visibility and drive growth. A notable example can be found in the local food and beverage sector, where businesses have effectively utilized platforms like Instagram to create visually appealing content that highlights their products.

Visual Storytelling

By posting high-quality images and videos of their dishes and drinks, these businesses not only showcase their offerings but also tell a story that resonates with their audience. This visual storytelling captivates potential customers, sparking interest and encouraging them to visit the establishments.

Increased Customer Engagement

The interactive nature of social media allows these businesses to engage directly with their customers. They can respond to comments, conduct polls, and share user-generated content, creating a community around their brand. This two-way communication fosters a sense of connection and loyalty among customers, making them more likely to return.

Sales Growth

The impact of social media marketing on sales is evident in these case studies. By effectively showcasing their products and engaging with their audience, these SMEs have reported increases in foot traffic and online orders. Promotions and special offers shared

via social media have also driven immediate sales spikes, demonstrating the platform's effectiveness in converting engagement into revenue.

Brand Awareness

Successful case studies highlight the role of social media in enhancing brand awareness. As customers share their experiences online, they inadvertently become brand ambassadors, helping to spread word-of-mouth recommendations. This organic promotion is invaluable for SMEs, as it builds credibility and attracts new customers.

As for the conclusion of the findings of this study, the example from Makassar illustrates the transformative potential of social media marketing for SMEs. By adopting innovative strategies and utilizing platforms that resonate with their target audience, these businesses not only enhance their market presence but also contribute to the overall economic vitality of the region. The successful implementation of social media marketing serves as a compelling model for other SMEs looking to grow and thrive in a competitive marketplace.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media marketing has emerged as a crucial driver of growth and sustainability for SMEs in Makassar. This shift is particularly important as these businesses seek innovative ways to compete in an increasingly digital marketplace. Based on the findings of this study, this study concludes that one of the most significant advantages of social media marketing is its cost-effectiveness. Traditional marketing methods, such as print advertising or television commercials, often require substantial financial investment, which can be prohibitive for SMEs. In contrast, social media platforms offer affordable options for reaching a broad audience. By utilizing targeted advertising and organic content strategies, SMEs can effectively promote their products and services without straining their budgets.

Moreover, this study also concludes that social media also enhances customer engagement, which is vital for building brand loyalty. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow businesses to interact directly with their customers, respond to inquiries, and gather feedback. This level of engagement creates a sense of community around the brand, encouraging customers to feel more connected and invested in the business. As a result, SMEs can cultivate a loyal customer base that supports them over the long term.

Moreover, this study finds that the integration of social media into business operations has transformed how SMEs in Makassar approach marketing and customer relations. Businesses can quickly disseminate information about promotions, new products, or events, allowing them to respond swiftly to market demands. This agility is essential in a fast-paced environment where consumer preferences can shift rapidly. In summary, social media marketing plays a transformative role for SMEs in Makassar, offering cost-effective solutions and fostering deeper customer connections. However, addressing the barriers of digital literacy and competition is essential for these businesses to fully capitalize on the opportunities presented by social media. By investing in training and resources, SMEs can enhance their capabilities and ensure their continued success in a dynamic digital landscape.

Moreover, the journey toward fully leveraging social media marketing, however, is not without its challenges. To be more specific, this study finds that many SME owners may lack the necessary digital literacy skills to navigate social media effectively. This gap can hinder their ability to create engaging content, analyse performance metrics, and implement successful marketing strategies. Additionally, the competitive nature of social media means that businesses must continually innovate to stand out amidst a crowded

digital landscape. Without the right skills and knowledge, SMEs risk falling behind their competitors who are more adept at using these tools. To maximize the benefits of social media marketing, it is crucial to address these challenges. Future research should focus on developing comprehensive training programs aimed at enhancing the digital skills of SME owners and their employees. These programs could cover a range of topics, from content creation and social media strategy to data analysis and customer engagement techniques. By equipping SMEs with the right tools and knowledge, they can thrive in the digital age, effectively harnessing social media to drive growth and sustainability.

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