

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY TO INCREASE MSME SALES

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ABSTRACT

Research Objectives - This study aims to identify and analyze the most effective digital marketing strategies for increasing MSME sales, using Mila Enterprise as a case study.

Method - The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation, which are then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques.

Research Findings – The optimal digital marketing strategy for Mila Enterprise includes utilizing social media, integrating WhatsApp for transactions, creating engaging content, and managing a customer community to enhance engagement and loyalty.

Theory and Practical Implications - Theoretically, the findings indicate that integrating social media-based digital marketing with WhatsApp can strengthen relationship-based marketing strategies. Practically, the study provides guidance for MSMEs in developing effective digital marketing strategies to enhance competitiveness and sales

Novelty - This study offers an integrative approach to MSME digital marketing by utilizing WhatsApp as a central platform for transactions and customer community management, a specific aspect that has been underexplored in small business contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes across various economic and social aspects, particularly in how businesses operate and interact with their consumers. In the context of the digital economy, technology-based marketing, or digital marketing, has become a primary strategy implemented across various industry sectors, including micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Digital marketing enables businesses to reach a broader audience, enhance customer engagement, and optimize marketing efficiency. According to a recent report by McKinsey & Company (2024), MSMEs that implement digital marketing strategies experience a 40% increase in sales compared to those that still rely on conventional methods. With the increasing penetration of the internet and social media users in Indonesia, digital marketing has become a strategic necessity that MSMEs cannot overlook to enhance their competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic market.

Although digital marketing offers numerous opportunities, previous studies have shown that many MSMEs still face challenges in effectively adopting this strategy. Research by Priyono & Sari (2023) revealed that one of the primary obstacles in implementing digital marketing is the limited knowledge and digital skills among MSME entrepreneurs. Additionally, a study by Rambe et al. (2023) found that while social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp can enhance interaction and customer engagement, not all MSMEs can optimize these platforms to significantly boost sales. This creates a gap in the utilization of digital technology that needs to be addressed through a more strategic and research-based approach.

Furthermore, the digital marketing theory proposed by Kotler et al. (2023) states that successful marketing strategies depend not only on technology utilization but also on a deep

understanding of digital consumer behavior. However, much of the existing research has focused on the implementation of digital marketing in large-scale enterprises, leaving a gap in studies specifically discussing the adoption of digital marketing strategies among MSMEs, particularly in local contexts such as Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by exploring how MSMEs can adopt digital marketing more effectively to increase sales.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on digital marketing strategies specifically for MSMEs in rural areas, which have often been overlooked in previous studies. This study not only explores the general application of digital marketing but also identifies specific barriers faced by MSMEs in adopting digital marketing strategies. Moreover, this research employs the TOWS analysis approach to provide more applicable strategic recommendations tailored to the real conditions of MSMEs in Indonesia, particularly small businesses such as Usaha Mila in Ajangpulu Village, Cina District, Bone Regency.

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze the most effective digital marketing strategies for increasing MSME sales, using Usaha Mila as a case study. Additionally, this research aims to provide insights for MSME entrepreneurs on how they can optimize digital technology in their marketing activities. However, this study has limitations, such as its scope, which focuses only on a single MSME, making the generalization of findings cautious. Furthermore, limited access to broader data on digital consumer behavior in rural areas may also impact the research results. Therefore, this study is expected to serve as a foundation for further research involving a larger number of MSMEs across different regions.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of digital marketing phenomena, particularly in the context of increasing sales at Usaha Mila. A descriptive method allows researchers to systematically and factually portray real-world occurrences (Creswell, 2014). Several previous studies using this method have demonstrated that digital marketing through social media significantly impacts consumer purchasing power and small business promotion strategies (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Felix et al., 2017). A study by Felix et al. (2017) found that social media-based digital marketing strategies enhance customer interaction and brand loyalty. Thus, this method was selected to reveal how digital marketing is implemented by Usaha Mila and how the surrounding community responds to these marketing strategies.

The data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2019). Observations were conducted to examine the digital marketing activities applied by Usaha Mila, including the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Interviews were conducted with business owners and customers to gain perspectives on the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. Semi-structured interviews were used to allow flexibility in exploring topics (Bryman, 2012). Documentation was used to collect secondary data, including transaction records, promotional histories, and social media posts utilized in marketing (Miles et al., 2014).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data reduction was performed by selecting relevant information from observations, interviews, and documentation. The data were then presented in a narrative description to facilitate the comprehension of research findings. Conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns and relationships between digital marketing strategies and sales growth. To clarify the relationship between the examined variables, a conceptual framework was employed to illustrate how social media as a marketing tool contributes to increased sales at Usaha Mila (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in enhancing sales and customer engagement. To design its implementation for Usaha Mila, an analysis of the research findings was conducted to assess its potential effectiveness. The research was thoroughly analyzed to determine the most suitable platforms and marketing methods aligned with consumer preferences.

To provide appropriate recommendations, a TOWS (Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Strengths) analysis was conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the implementation of digital marketing strategies. Weihrich (1982) explained that the TOWS Matrix is an extension of the SWOT analysis, emphasizing the alignment between internal and external factors to generate more targeted strategies. This matrix enables organizations not only to adopt a defensive stance against threats but also to be proactive in leveraging opportunities. Furthermore, Rangkuti (2016) highlighted the importance of systematically aligning these factors to ensure that the formulated strategies can adapt to the ever-changing market dynamics.

The use of the TOWS Matrix is highly beneficial in long-term strategic planning, where businesses must adapt to changes in the external environment while maximizing available internal resources to achieve competitive advantage (David, 2013). This matrix also aids in identifying various alternative scenarios that an organization may face and provides a solid foundation for strategic decision-making. Through this approach, the study is expected to offer a clearer perspective on the implementation of digital marketing strategies to support increased sales in the retail business (Wibowo, 2021; Rahmawati, 2020).

Based on survey results, it was found that most respondents have a strong preference for using social media platforms to interact with businesses. The data indicate that more than 60% of respondents actively use social media to search for product information, communicate with sellers, and conduct transactions. These findings align with previous research, which suggests that the use of social media as a digital marketing tool has significantly increased among consumers, particularly in the retail sector (Suryani, 2022).

Additionally, respondents' platform preferences highlight the importance for businesses to optimize marketing strategies that are relevant to the most frequently used platforms by consumers. The survey findings serve as a foundation for developing more targeted and efficient marketing strategies to enhance sales. To achieve the objectives of this study, a situational analysis was conducted, covering both the internal and external environment of Usaha Mila to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths include: (a) a high utilization rate of WhatsApp, with 98% of respondents using WhatsApp daily. This provides a competitive advantage as it allows businesses to stay connected with consumers directly and personally; (b) the availability of marketing features across various social media platforms. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok offer features that facilitate businesses in displaying, promoting, and selling products effectively; (c) a strong store reputation among customers. Usaha Mila has built a good reputation, particularly due to direct interactions in traditional markets. Customer trust and loyalty are essential factors in maintaining and increasing sales.

Weaknesses include: (a) limited human resources for managing digital marketing. Usaha Mila faces workforce constraints in handling social media marketing, which requires specialized skills in content creation, platform algorithm understanding, and engagement enhancement; (b) overreliance on WhatsApp as the sole marketing channel. Although 98% of respondents use WhatsApp, Instagram (38%) and TikTok (52%) usage remains low. This suggests that Usaha Mila may not yet fully understand or maximize the potential of various digital platforms.

Opportunities include: (a) the growing number of social media users, which presents an opportunity for Usaha Mila to expand its audience reach and improve customer engagement; (b) the ease of product promotion, as social media provides various features that enable businesses to reach a broader audience beyond their local area through extensive and interactive digital content; (c) a more comprehensive product presentation. By utilizing digital media, Usaha Mila can showcase its product catalog more informatively, including images, descriptions, and prices. Features such as

WhatsApp catalogs, Facebook posts, and Instagram can be leveraged to strengthen marketing strategies and enhance product appeal; (d) improved shopping convenience. Survey results indicate that 70% of respondents consider shopping convenience as a key factor in online purchase decisions. Services such as WhatsApp ordering, digital payments, and home delivery add value for customers who prefer a hassle-free shopping experience without visiting physical stores.

Threats include: (a) intense competition on social media. Usaha Mila must compete with other businesses that have already established a strong presence on Instagram and TikTok with engaging visual content. Hence, marketing strategies must be more creative and competitive; (b) ease of entry for competitors in digital platforms. The accessibility of social media allows competitors to quickly offer similar products. Therefore, Usaha Mila must develop stronger marketing strategies to compete effectively.

Table 1 TOWS Matrix

	Strength (S)	Weakness (W)
TOWS MATRIX	1. The high usage of WhatsApp as a communication and marketing tool. 2. Availability of various features to showcase and promote products on social media. 3. Good reputation among customers.	1. Limited human resources in managing marketing on social media. 2. Limited utilization of digital media, with the main focus only on WhatsApp.
Opportunities (O)	SO Strategies	WO Strategies
1. Increase in the number of social media users. 2. Ease of promoting products through various digital platforms. 3. Products can be presented more comprehensively using digital media. 4. Convenience for consumers in shopping online.	1. Optimize the use of social media to showcase products more comprehensively and attractively (S2, O3). 2. Facilitate shopping with an ordering system through WhatsApp, digital payments, and delivery services (S1, O4). 3. Develop marketing promotions/campaigns based on customer reviews and testimonials to enhance business credibility (S3, O1, O2).	1. Conduct training for employees to enhance their skills in creating engaging and informative content to increase product appeal (W1, O1, O2, O3, O4). 2. Utilize WhatsApp as a marketing hub and a bridge to other social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram) to expand promotional reach (W2, O1).
Threats (T)	ST Strategies	WT Strategy
1. Intense competition on social media. 2. Competitors can easily offer products on digital platforms.	1. Create unique and engaging content to enhance competitiveness on social media (S2, T1). 2. Offer exclusive deals to loyal customers to increase customer retention (S2, T2).	Building a customer community on WhatsApp through exclusive customer groups and buy-and-sell groups to enhance engagement and customer loyalty (W2, T1).

Based on the TOWS analysis, this study identifies digital marketing strategies that can be implemented to enhance sales at Usaha Mila. The proposed strategies include Strength-Opportunities (SO), Weaknesses-Opportunities (WO), Strength-Threats (ST), and Weaknesses-Threats (WT) strategies.

Strength-Opportunities (SO) Strategy. This strategy consists of the following approach: first, optimizing the use of social media to comprehensively showcase products. The goal of this strategy is to leverage Usaha Mila's strengths—namely, the high usage rate of WhatsApp and its strong reputation among customers—while capitalizing on the opportunities presented by the growing number of social media users and the ability to provide a more comprehensive digital product display.

To support this strategy, Usaha Mila needs to create visually appealing content, such as high-quality product images and videos. Interactive features, such as the product catalog in WhatsApp Business, can be utilized to systematically display various products according to their respective categories. In addition to WhatsApp, Usaha Mila can expand its marketing reach by showcasing products on other platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Since each platform has distinct characteristics and target audiences, it is essential to tailor content to suit each platform to maximize marketing effectiveness.

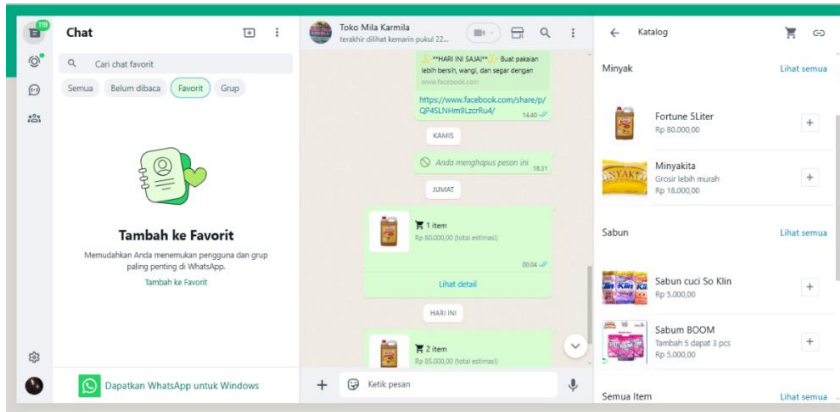


Figure 1 Usaha Mila's Product Catalog When Consumers Place an Order

Second, facilitating a seamless shopping experience for consumers through WhatsApp ordering, digital payments, and delivery services. This strategy aims to enhance the consumer shopping experience by leveraging the high usage of WhatsApp as a communication and transaction platform. Usaha Mila needs to provide a simple and intuitive ordering system via WhatsApp, allowing customers to place orders easily by sending a message. Additionally, various digital payment methods, such as e-wallets and bank transfers, should be made available to ensure that customers can choose the most convenient option. To further enhance convenience, Usaha Mila can also offer home delivery services, ensuring that products are received promptly and in good condition.

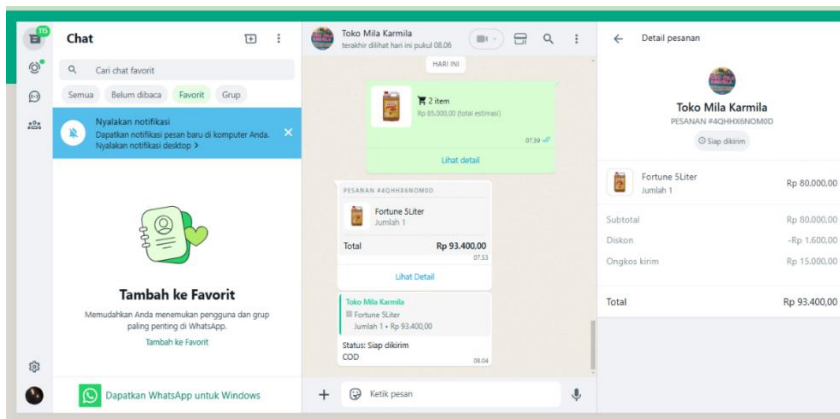


Figure 2 Ordering via WhatsApp

Third, developing a marketing campaign based on customer testimonials and positive reviews. This strategy aims to leverage Usaha Mila's strong reputation among customers while enhancing product promotion through social media.

To achieve this, Usaha Mila should actively collect testimonials and positive reviews from customers after their purchase. These testimonials can be presented as social media content, such as posts or videos showcasing customer satisfaction with the products and services. Positive reviews serve as social proof that can increase trust among potential customers.

Additionally, Usaha Mila can encourage customers to share their shopping experiences on social media by offering incentives such as discounts or rewards. This strategy not only boosts product visibility but also fosters positive interactions between customers and Usaha Mila. Customer engagement can be observed through comments or reactions to posts on platforms such as

Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok. Furthermore, customer feedback from these interactions can provide valuable insights for Usaha Mila to improve product and service quality.

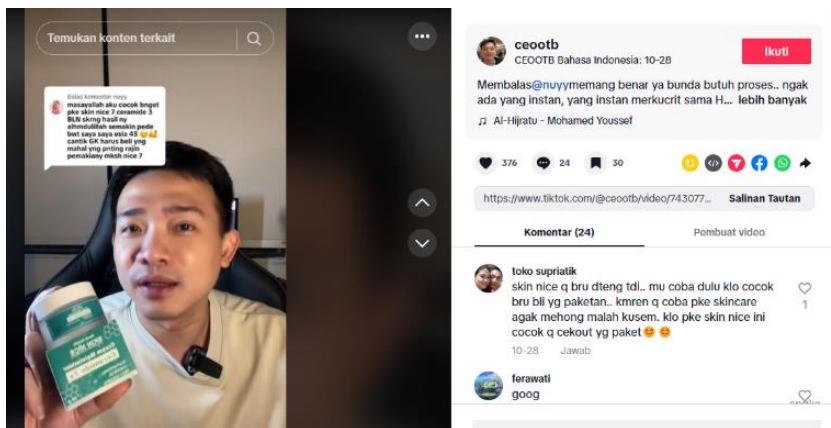


Figure 3 Example of testimonial used as content

The image above is an example of content from a skincare brand that responds to customer comments on previous posts through a short video. This response attracts other users' attention and increases engagement.

Weakness–Opportunities (WO) Strategy. This strategy consists of the following: First, employee training for content creation skills enhancement. Conducting training sessions for employees to improve their ability to create engaging and informative content about products, thereby enhancing the visual appeal of the products. This strategy aims to address weaknesses in human resource skills in managing social media. With 68% of respondents stating that social media content significantly influences their purchasing decisions, enhancing skills in creating visually appealing content can increase the chances of capturing consumer attention and boosting sales.

Usaha Mila needs skilled human resources in content creation, including photography techniques, video editing, persuasive copywriting, and the use of graphic design tools. Therefore, training sessions can be organized by inviting digital marketing experts. These training programs can be conducted either online or offline, depending on employee needs and availability.

Second, utilizing WhatsApp as a marketing hub. Establishing WhatsApp as a central marketing tool to enhance the use of Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. This strategy focuses on leveraging WhatsApp, which already has a high usage rate, to expand marketing reach to other social media platforms. Usaha Mila can use WhatsApp to direct customers to other platforms, for example, by sending links to Facebook posts, Instagram updates, or TikTok videos related to the products.

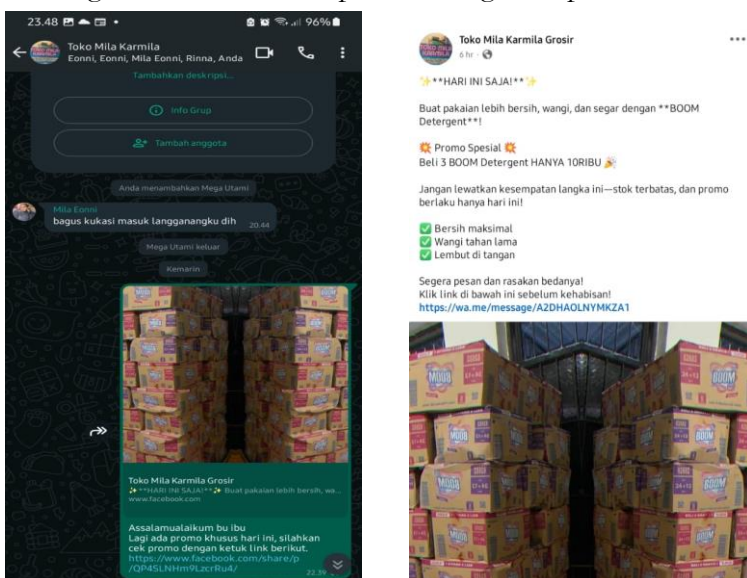


Figure 4 Sharing promotional post links from facebook and product post displays leading to WhatsApp chat

Usaha Mila can create promotional campaigns that integrate all platforms. For example, offering special rewards to customers who post on Instagram Stories and share the link in WhatsApp groups. This strategy can automatically increase engagement on Instagram. Not only does it expand reach, but it also helps build a community around the brand.



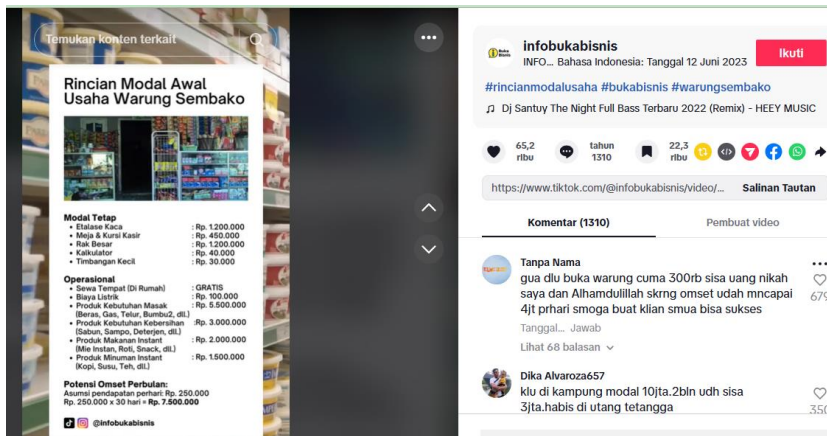
Figure 5 Instagram story link

By establishing WhatsApp as the primary communication channel, Usaha Mila can quickly receive customer feedback on content shared across other platforms. Additionally, building a community on WhatsApp can foster discussions, interactions, and enhance customer loyalty.

Strength-Threats (ST) Strategy. This strategy includes: first, creating unique and engaging content on social media. This strategy aims to leverage Usaha Mila's strengths—such as its strong reputation among customers, high WhatsApp usage, and the availability of social media features—to address the threats posed by competition in the digital space. Usaha Mila must develop a clear and consistent brand identity across all social media platforms. This can be achieved through a content style guide that defines visual elements and narratives reflecting the brand's values and product uniqueness. A strong brand identity will help differentiate Usaha Mila from competitors and strengthen customer loyalty.

Usaha Mila can create interactive content that actively engages the audience, such as quizzes, polls, and challenges, to boost customer interaction. Interactive content not only captures attention but also encourages customers to share their experiences, which in turn increases brand visibility. Additionally, Usaha Mila can diversify its content types, including behind-the-scenes videos of store preparations, real-time sales activities, and customer stories, to present product information in a compelling manner. This approach helps customers better understand the shopping experience, ultimately increasing their intent to purchase.

Beyond product promotions, Usaha Mila can also share educational and entertaining content relevant to its offerings. For instance, tutorials on saving money, business management insights, or even lighthearted content such as shopping-related memes. Providing valuable and engaging content can drive interaction and foster a positive atmosphere within the brand's community.



Source: <https://www.tiktok.com/@infobukabisnis/video>

Figure 6 Example of content: tips for starting a grocery business

The content above is an example of how social media engagement can be increased, especially among users who are planning to start a business. By creating similar content and adding special offers, such as business starter packages for customers, Usaha Mila can attract more potential buyers and build stronger engagement between the business and its audience.

Second, offering exclusive deals to loyal customers. This strategy aims to leverage Usaha Mila's strong reputation and customer loyalty to counter competition from digital platforms offering similar products. Usaha Mila can develop a loyalty program that rewards repeat customers with incentives such as reward points, special discounts, or early access to new products. By providing exclusive offers, customers will feel valued and more inclined to continue shopping with Usaha Mila.

Additionally, utilizing customer data to create personalized offers can enhance marketing effectiveness. Through WhatsApp, Usaha Mila can send direct messages to loyal customers about exclusive deals tailored to their preferences and purchasing behavior.

Engaging loyal customers in providing feedback on existing offers and products can also help Usaha Mila improve service quality. This approach makes customers feel more involved and contributes to business development, ultimately strengthening their loyalty.



Figure 7 Instagram story campaign: special giveaway for members

Weakness-Threats (WT) Strategy: Building a WhatsApp Community. This strategy aims to address Usaha Mila's weakness—limited digital media usage—by leveraging threats from competition on social media and the ease with which competitors offer products through digital platforms. Usaha Mila can create a WhatsApp group focused on customers, where they can interact directly with the business and with one another. This group can be used to share information about new products, exclusive offers, and shopping tips. Such interaction fosters a sense of community and loyalty among customers.

Within the WhatsApp community, customers can provide direct feedback on products and services. Usaha Mila can use this feedback to improve and develop services that better meet customer needs. Open discussions will give customers a sense of ownership over the products and services offered. Usaha Mila can also utilize WhatsApp's broadcast feature to quickly distribute important information to all community members, ensuring that customers always receive updates on products, promotions, and events.

The Role of Digital Platforms in Strengthening Customer Relationships. In today's digital era, internet-based communication platforms play a key role in small and medium-sized business (SME) marketing strategies. WhatsApp, one of the most widely used platforms, enables closer interaction between businesses and customers. Features such as instant messaging, groups, and status updates make it easier for businesses to share information, promote products, and receive direct customer feedback.

Research findings confirm that WhatsApp is instrumental in increasing interactions between businesses and consumers. These results align with previous studies highlighting the effectiveness of digital communication in building customer closeness, enhancing satisfaction, and strengthening loyalty. In the case of Usaha Mila, WhatsApp is not only a communication tool but also an effective promotional medium that simplifies shopping and builds trust through customer reviews. Additionally, cross-platform integration and exclusive offer strategies further strengthen digital marketing efforts. This research explores how digital marketing strategies via WhatsApp and other social media platforms can be optimized to enhance SME competitiveness and expand market reach.

WhatsApp as an Effective Promotional Tool. Beyond communication, WhatsApp also plays a strategic role as an effective promotional medium. Features such as product catalogs, broadcast messages, and status updates enable businesses to quickly and widely distribute product information. According to survey results, 98% of respondents use WhatsApp daily, and 86% have purchased a product after receiving a promotion through the platform. This demonstrates that WhatsApp is not only a communication channel but also a significant factor in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. Komalasari et al. (2021) emphasize that digital marketing provides advantages in terms of speed and efficiency in business-customer interactions. Therefore, marketing strategies leveraging WhatsApp, particularly with engaging visual content and persuasive promotional messages, can significantly boost product sales.

Convenience in Shopping as a Key Factor in Customer Satisfaction. Ease of shopping is one of the primary factors influencing customer satisfaction. Digital ordering systems and direct home delivery services eliminate the need for in-store visits, saving time and effort. Survey results indicate that 70% of respondents consider convenience a major factor in their purchasing decisions. This aligns with research by Kurnia & Widiati (2024), which states that service quality and transaction ease significantly impact customer satisfaction. When transactions are quick and simple, customers are more satisfied, which in turn fosters loyalty. Therefore, businesses must continuously innovate digital services to enhance customer convenience.

The Influence of Customer Reviews on Purchasing Decisions. In a digital environment, customer reviews play a crucial role in shaping potential buyers' perceptions of a product. Consumers often seek references or testimonials from previous buyers before making a purchase decision. Research findings show that 58% of respondents consider customer reviews a key factor in their online purchasing decisions. By collecting and displaying positive reviews, businesses can build trust and strengthen brand image. Maulidar (2022) supports this finding, stating that customer reviews have a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase decisions. Usaha Mila can optimize its marketing strategy by showcasing customer reviews on social media and in promotional messages to enhance trust and product appeal.

Cross-Platform Integration in Digital Marketing Strategies. To maximize digital marketing effectiveness, cross-platform integration is essential. Using multiple social media platforms allows businesses to reach a wider audience and increase customer engagement. Survey results show that Facebook and WhatsApp have high user engagement levels, with 84% of respondents frequently viewing product posts on Facebook. This indicates that connecting various digital platforms in

marketing strategies enhances promotional effectiveness. Research by Hamdani & Nugroho (2023) confirms that digital marketing through social media attracts new customers and expands market share. Therefore, Usaha Mila can optimize its strategy by utilizing multiple platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook to strengthen its marketing efforts.

Exclusive Offers as a Strategy to Increase Customer Loyalty. Maintaining customer loyalty is one of the biggest challenges in business. One effective strategy is offering exclusive deals to repeat customers, such as special discounts, loyalty programs, or priority access to new products. Survey findings reveal that 70% of respondents are influenced by shopping convenience, while 64% are swayed by discounts and promotions in their purchasing decisions. This proves that offering special incentives helps retain customers and boost sales volume. Ramadhan (2024) supports this finding, stating that discounts effectively increase customer purchase interest. Usaha Mila can leverage this strategy by providing exclusive promotions to loyal customers, fostering long-term relationships and brand loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Based on the TOWS analysis conducted, this study successfully identified digital marketing strategies that can be applied to increase sales for Usaha Mila. The proposed strategies include optimizing social media usage to showcase products more attractively, facilitating shopping through WhatsApp and digital services, and launching marketing campaigns based on customer testimonials to enhance business credibility. Additionally, training employees in digital marketing management is crucial for expanding marketing reach by integrating WhatsApp with other social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Creating unique and engaging marketing content is also necessary to increase competitiveness on social media, along with offering exclusive promotions to maintain customer loyalty amid intense competition.

Furthermore, building a customer community on WhatsApp through exclusive groups is one strategy to enhance customer engagement and loyalty as a defense against market competition. By implementing these strategies, Usaha Mila can maximize the potential of digital marketing, expand its audience reach, and strengthen its competitiveness. This approach is expected not only to increase sales but also to establish long-term relationships with customers, allowing Usaha Mila to grow sustainably in the digital era.

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