

## **Proceeding of International**

Conference on Science and Technology

Lembaga Penelitian Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat dan Dakwah Islamiyah, Universitas Islam Kuantan Singingi, Indonesia, September 19<sup>th</sup> 2024 DOI: https://doi.org/10.36378/internationalconferenceuniks.v2i1



Page: 24-30

# The Digital Marketing through E-commerce at Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Culinary Sector in Pekanbaru

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#### Abstract

This study investigates the impact of e-commerce digital marketing on sales performance in the culinary sector in Pekanbaru, with a specific emphasis on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). The primary objectives are to understand the implementation process of digital marketing strategies, identify the challenges faced by small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing sales performance. The study employs a qualitative methodology. The study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with a total of 78 persons, encompassing business owners, managers, marketing professionals, digital marketing experts, and representatives from e-commerce platforms. The subjects were selected by purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was employed to evaluate the qualitative data and identify prominent themes and patterns. The results indicate a significant and positive impact of digital marketing and e-commerce on sales performance. A substantial number of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) reported an increase in customer engagement, higher sales statistics, and improved revenue growth. The strategies that have been demonstrated to be most successful are social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and content marketing. However, small and medium-sized firms faced challenges such as limited resources, lack of specialized expertise, and fierce competition. Despite these obstacles, digital marketing and e-commerce were shown to offer substantial opportunities for growth and market expansion, surpassing the challenges.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, E-commerce, Culinary Sector.

## 1. Introduction

The culinary industry has undergone a notable change in recent years, mostly due to developments in digital marketing and the widespread use of ecommerce platforms. These technological advancements have fundamentally transformed the way business's function, particularly for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary sector. Many cities renowned for its lively culinary scene, is witnessing a growing trend among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to adopt digital marketing tactics in order to expand their market presence and enhance consumer interaction [1].

The amalgamation of digital marketing and ecommerce has emerged as an indispensable element for the triumph of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on a global scale[2]. Multiple studies have emphasized the potential advantages of digital marketing tactics, such as social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and content marketing, in increasing sales and cultivating consumer loyalty. E-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Bukalapak have fundamentally transformed the manner in which businesses engage with customers, presenting unparalleled prospects for expansion [3]. The study conducted by Smith et al. (2020) shows that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that make use of these platforms observe significant enhancements in their visibility and revenue. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on the precise effects of this phenomenon on the culinary industry in regional markets such as Pekanbaru. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct localized studies in order to gain a deeper understanding of these dynamics.

The influence of e-commerce-based digital marketing on sales performance in small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the culinary sector is a complex matter that has been examined in numerous research. Research has demonstrated that incorporating digital marketing methods, namely through e-commerce platforms, can greatly improve sales performance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in this industry. First and foremost, digital marketing enables small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to effectively target a wider range of potential customers, which is essential for boosting sales. Utilizing social media and online marketplaces enables businesses to effectively and efficiently interact with customers, resulting in heightened brand visibility and customer acquisition [4].

This is especially crucial in the food industry, where the visual attractiveness and client interaction are vital in recruiting new customers [5]. Furthermore, the use of e-commerce platforms allows small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

to optimize their sales procedures, decrease operating expenses, and provide clients with a more convenient purchasing experience. This not only enhances client satisfaction but also boosts overall performance by enabling seamless transactions and expanding market reach beyond geographical constraints. The user's text consists of two references [6]. Nevertheless, the effective execution of digital marketing strategies necessitates small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to surmount specific obstacles, including the requirement for technological proficiency and the initial capital investment in digital tools and platforms [7]. Several studies indicate that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may encounter challenges in adjusting to quickly evolving digital trends and customer behaviors. These obstacles can impede their capacity to effectively take advantage of e-commerce opportunities[2].

Moreover, the success of digital marketing in enhancing sales performance relies on the strategic synchronization of marketing endeavors with corporate objectives. SMEs that customize their digital marketing strategies to match their distinct value propositions and meet the specific needs of their target market are more likely to achieve substantial enhancements in sales performance [3]. E-commerce-based digital marketing has a beneficial effect on sales performance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry. It achieves this by broadening the scope of the market, improving customer interaction, and optimizing sales procedures[4]. Nevertheless, the magnitude of this influence is contingent upon the SMEs' capacity to conform to digital trends and strategically integrate these tools in accordance with their company goals[5].

Although there is a substantial amount of literature discussing the advantages of digital marketing and e-commerce for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the majority of studies tend to concentrate on larger markets or broad sectors. There is a significant study deficit that focuses on the food industry in smaller cities such as Pekanbaru. Furthermore, current research frequently fails to consider the distinct difficulties and advantages encountered by small and mediumsized enterprises (SMEs) when implementing digital marketing strategies in these particular areas. This study seeks to address this deficiency by conducting a thorough examination of the efficacy of digital marketing via e-commerce for small and medium-sized culinary businesses in Pekanbaru. The analysis will take into account the local market conditions, consumer behavior, and rates of technological adoption.

The objective of this study is to investigate the

efficacy of digital marketing via e-commerce for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary sector in Pekanbaru. It aims to evaluate the influence of these contemporary tools on business performance. The unique aspect of this study is its concentration on the culinary industry within a particular regional setting, offering valuable insights that are not only relevant to the local area but also possibly useful for similar markets. This research aims to provide significant insights on the effectiveness of digital marketing and e-commerce tactics in improving business performance by examining data from culinary SMEs in Pekanbaru. Moreover, it will ascertain optimal strategies and possible challenges, so enhancing the overall discussion on digital marketing for small and medium-sized enterprises. The results anticipated to offer practical suggestions for entrepreneurs and politicians, promoting a stronger and more competitive food industry in Pekanbaru and other areas. The authors are solely responsible for the content of the manuscript written and the manuscript is an author that has never been published.

### 2. Research Methods

This study used a qualitative research methodology to examine the efficacy of digital marketing on sales via e-commerce among Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry in Pekanbaru. The technique employs semistructured interviews and purposive sampling to gather and evaluate data from key informants, such as business owners, managers, and marketing people of chosen culinary SMEs, along with digital marketing specialists and e-commerce platform representatives. By employing purposive sampling, the study will ensure that the participants chosen had pertinent knowledge and expertise, thereby yielding abundant and enlightening data. This approach will entail the participation of 78 proprietors of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the culinary industry in Pekanbaru.

The data collection process involves conducting semi-structured interviews to obtain comprehensive insights into the experiences, difficulties, and perspectives of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on the utilization of digital marketing and e-commerce. The interviews will be conducted using pre-established questions, while yet allowing for freedom to go deeper into developing themes. The key subjects to be examined encompass the implementation of digital marketing and e-commerce strategies in the adoption process, the strategic methodologies adopted by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the challenges encountered, and the stories of success.

The interviews will be evaluated using theme analysis to examine the qualitative data. This process involves becoming acquainted with the data through repeated reading of the interview transcripts. Initial codes are then generated to categorize relevant segments of the data. Themes are identified and developed based on the coded data. These themes are reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflect the data. Each theme is then defined and given a name. Finally, the themes are integrated into a coherent narrative that complements and provides context for the quantitative findings.

This study seeks to enhance the validity and reliability of its research findings by employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and achieving data triangulation. The quantitative data will offer a comprehensive view of patterns and connections, while the qualitative data will provide perspectives in-depth and explanations, contributing to a more comprehensive knowledge of the research issue. This hybrid research methodology will provide a thorough evaluation of the efficacy of digital marketing via e-commerce on sales performance at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry in Pekanbaru.

## 3. Results and Discussions

## 3.1 Adoption Process

A significant number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry in Pekanbaru have adopted digital marketing and ecommerce techniques to enhance their market penetration and boost their sales performance. Businesses exhibited substantial variation in the implementation of these methods. Several small medium-sized enterprises systematically incorporated digital tools into their operations, adopting a methodical approach to adjust and test different platforms and marketing strategies. The incremental implementation enabled organizations to acquire knowledge and adapt their strategy in response to initial outcomes and feedback. Conversely, other organizations promptly adapted to market needs and competitive pressure by fast implementing digital marketing and e-commerce tactics to obtain a competitive advantage.

The early stage of adoption was characterized by substantial acquisition of knowledge and exploration. Business owners and managers frequently characterized this period as a phase of experimentation, during which they tested various digital platforms and marketing strategies to ascertain the most effective ones for their specific requirements. During this learning phase, the

company conducted experiments on other social media sites, such as Instagram and Facebook, in order to interact with customers and visually advertise their products. Additionally, numerous firms made investments in search engine optimization (SEO) and content marketing strategies to enhance their online presence and draw in a greater volume of organic visitors to their websites or e-commerce listings.

An overarching motif among the individuals interviewed was the difficulty of maneuvering through the swiftly changing digital terrain. Participants observed that remaining informed about the most recent advancements and technology in digital marketing necessitated ongoing dedication and adjustment. Although facing these difficulties, the majority of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) acknowledged the enduring advantages of digital marketing and e-commerce. They documented substantial enhancements in client interaction, sales volume, and overall revenue as a consequence of their digital tactics.

Implementing digital marketing strategies in ecommerce has been proven to greatly improve sales performance in small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the culinary industry. This method encompasses various essential elements that collectively contribute to enhanced company results. First and foremost, implementing digital marketing methods, such as social media marketing and search engine optimization, is essential for enhancing visibility and drawing in a wider customer base.

These strategies facilitate small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in expanding their reach to a larger audience while incurring reduced expenses as compared to conventional marketing techniques [6]. By integrating e-commerce platforms, businesses are able to provide a smooth and uninterrupted shopping experience, which is crucial maintaining consumer loyalty and ensuring their happiness [8]. Furthermore, the utilization of data analytics in digital marketing offers small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with significant observations regarding consumer behavior and preferences[9]. Utilizing this data can be utilized to customize marketing strategies and product options, therefore improving consumer interaction and boosting revenues [10]. Being able to rapidly adjust to market developments and consumer requests is a notable benefit of digital marketing in the ecommerce setting [11]. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of these digital techniques necessitates overcoming specific obstacles. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) frequently have limitations in resources, such as restricted finances and a lack of technical proficiency, which can impede the successful execution of digital marketing endeavors [12]. Furthermore, it is imperative to engage in ongoing education and adjustment in order to stay abreast of the swiftly advancing digital marketing tools and platforms [13].

Although there are obstacles to overcome, the advantages of utilizing digital marketing via ecommerce for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry are significant [14]. By efficiently leveraging digital tools, these firms can strengthen their competitive advantage, boost sales, and attain long-term growth[15].

Thus, it is crucial for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to allocate resources towards developing digital marketing skills and actively pursue collaborations or training programs to fully use their e-commerce capabilities. To summarize, implementing digital marketing strategies in e-commerce can bring about a profound change that has the potential to greatly enhance sales performance in small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the culinary industry. By utilizing digital tools and techniques, these organizations may strengthen their market presence, promote consumer interaction, and stimulate sales growth, regardless of the obstacles they encounter.

### 3.2. Role of E-commerce Platforms

E-commerce platforms have been crucial in enabling sales and broadening market penetration for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The extensive utilization of platforms such as Tokopedia and Shopee underscores their efficacy in granting enterprises access to a wider customer demographic. The incorporation of e-commerce into digital marketing tactics has enhanced these advantages, allowing businesses to exploit many channels for advertising and selling. Participants indicated that e-commerce platforms not only offered a quick means of accessing customers but also provided a range of tools for marketing and sales analysis.

E-commerce platforms played a crucial role in significantly expanding the market reach for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Several firms have indicated that platforms like as Tokopedia and Shopee have granted them access to a wider consumer base, hence allowing them to reach a larger pool of potential buyers and enhance their sales prospects. By integrating e-commerce with digital marketing, firms were able to utilize many channels to enhance their promotional and sales activities, thereby increasing their reach and efficacy.

The usefulness of merging digital marketing and ecommerce techniques was demonstrated by successful cases. For example, certain restaurant proprietors recounted how focused social media efforts and partnerships with food influencers resulted in a significant surge in orders. Some individuals highlighted the significance of search engine optimization (SEO) in drawing in local clientele to their virtual shops, leading to increased revenue and enhanced consumer loyalty. These success stories highlighted the efficacy of customized digital marketing and e-commerce tactics in achieving specific business objectives and satisfying customer requirements.

E-commerce platforms have a substantial impact on improving digital marketing techniques, which can therefore have a good effect on sales performance for small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the industry. By incorporating digital marketing into e-commerce platforms, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can expand their reach to a wider audience, enhance customer interaction, and enhance sales performance. Studies indicate that e-commerce platforms offer small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with tools to efficiently promote their products, including advertising, targeted customer relationship management, and data analytics.

These tools empower firms to customize their marketing strategy for specific consumer segments, hence enhancing the probability of sales conversions [16]. In addition, including social media and other digital channels into e-commerce platforms can improve brand exposure and consumer engagement, both of which are essential for boosting sales in the highly competitive culinary industry[1]. In addition, e-commerce platforms enable the gathering and examination of customer data, enabling small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to make well-informed choices on product offerings and marketing tactics [17]. Utilizing data analysis, this method enables firms to recognize patterns and customer inclinations, resulting in enhanced marketing strategies and increased sales efficacy[18]. SMEs, which frequently have limited resources compared to larger firms, can greatly benefit from their capacity to rapidly adjust to developments meet consumer market and expectations [19].

Nevertheless, the impact of digital marketing on e-commerce platforms can be influenced by other factors, such as the degree of digital literacy among small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) owners and the accessibility of resources for investing in digital marketing tools[20]. In addition, although e-commerce platforms provide various benefits, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) must also address obstacles such as heightened rivalry and the requirement for ongoing innovation to sustain client engagement [9].

Ultimately, e-commerce platforms greatly

strengthen the digital marketing capabilities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry, resulting in enhanced sales performance. By utilizing the tools and data offered by these platforms, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can efficiently connect with and captivate their intended customers, adjust to market changes, and ultimately stimulate sales expansion. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these endeavors relies on the SMEs' capacity to proficiently employ these digital technologies and adjust to the everchanging e-commerce landscape.

## 3.3. Challenges and Opportunities

Although digital marketing and e-commerce methods have shown great results, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry encounter various substantial obstacles. Primary among these factors are finite resources, absence of specialized knowledge, and fierce rivalry. Numerous small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have challenges due to limited finances, which might hinder their capacity to allocate funds towards extensive digital marketing campaigns and sophisticated e-commerce solutions. Moreover, the swift advancement of digital marketing technologies and platforms frequently poses a challenge for firms, necessitating them to constantly enhance their abilities and knowledge.

One significant obstacle is the absence of competence, since several small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack in-house specialists possessing the specific abilities required to proficiently handle and enhance digital marketing and e-commerce initiatives. The lack of competence in this area can result in less than ideal implementation and missed chances for success. Moreover, the fierce competition in the digital marketplace increases the burden on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to distinguish themselves and consistently innovate in order to outperform their competitors.

Tackling these difficulties requires a proactive approach. SMEs must engage in continuous learning and adaptation in order to stay up to date with the constantly evolving digital ecosystem. Businesses may require investment in personnel training and development or seek external assistance from digital marketing professionals who can offer the required skills and guidance. By adopting this approach, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can enhance their ability to negotiate the intricacies of digital marketing and ecommerce, and utilize these tools with greater effectiveness.

Although there are difficulties, the potential benefits of digital marketing and e-commerce are significant. These techniques provide small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with substantial opportunities for growth and expanding their market presence. They enable SMEs to access a wider range of customers, improve customer interaction, and increase sales performance. Adopting digital marketing and e-commerce offers significant advantages that surpass the challenges, making them worthwhile investments for the future prosperity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Nevertheless, numerous obstacles were recognized during the execution of digital marketing and ecommerce initiatives. **SMEs** commonly encountered problems such as limited financial resources, lack of competence, and intense rivalry. Business owners and managers sometimes face challenges with the expenses associated with digital marketing investments and the requirement for specialized expertise to efficiently oversee and enhance their digital operations. Moreover, the intense rivalry in the digital market compelled businesses to constantly innovate and distinguish their products and services.

Ultimately, the research highlights the substantial influence of digital marketing and e-commerce on the sales effectiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry in Pekanbaru. The results indicate that although implementing digital methods requires a period of learning and presents some obstacles, the advantages in terms of expanding market reach and improving sales performance are significant. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) effectively included digital marketing and ecommerce strategies had significant enhancements in consumer engagement and revenue, underscoring the significance of these technologies in the current competitive business landscape.

The incorporation of digital marketing into e-commerce has both advantages and disadvantages for small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the culinary industry, greatly affecting their sales performance. One of the main advantages is the increased scope and prominence that digital marketing offers [21]. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can utilize social media platforms and online marketplaces to reach a wider range of potential customers, which is essential for enhancing brand recognition and boosting sales [22]

In addition, digital marketing provides the opportunity for targeted advertising, allowing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to customize their marketing strategies to certain demographic groups. This, in turn, leads to higher conversion rates and increased consumer engagement[23]. Nevertheless, small and medium-sized enterprises

have numerous obstacles when it comes to efficiently harnessing the power of digital marketing. An important obstacle is the absence of knowledge and resources to execute complex digital marketing strategy. Small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) sometimes face challenges due to their restricted budgets and lack of expertise in digital platforms. This might impede their competitiveness against larger enterprises that possess greater marketing resources[24]. In addition, the dynamic and evolving digital environment necessitates ongoing adjustment and acquisition of knowledge, which can be challenging for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with limited resources[25].

An additional obstacle is the fierce rivalry within the digital realm. Due to the easily accessible nature of e-commerce, the market is flooded with a large number of participants, creating a challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to differentiate themselves and attract consumer interest [26]. Furthermore, it might be arduous to keep client loyalty in an online setting because of the effortless ability of consumers to transfer between different brands[27]. Notwithstanding difficulties, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can take advantage of digital marketing by prioritizing the establishment of robust client relationships and utilizing data analytics to gain a deeper understanding of consumer behavior.

To summarize, digital marketing via e-commerce provides substantial prospects for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry to enhance their sales performance. However, it also poses problems that necessitate strategic planning and allocation of resources. To overcome these problems, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can utilize the complete capabilities of digital marketing to succeed in a fiercely competitive market. SMEs in the culinary sector can improve their sales performance and achieve sustainable growth by prioritizing client needs and efficiently employing digital tools.

## 4. Conclusion

The research highlights the substantial influence of digital marketing and e-commerce on the sales performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry of Pekanbaru. The interviews provide insights that highlight the importance of digital tactics in contemporary corporate operations, which yield significant advantages such as enhanced customer interaction and improved revenues. Utilizing social media, search engine optimization (SEO), and e-commerce platforms has been crucial in expanding market reach and increasing income. These findings offer

essential direction for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), policymakers, and professionals in the industry. They emphasize the significance of allocating resources to digital marketing and e-commerce as a strategic method for attaining corporate success in a fiercely competitive industry. SMEs must continue to invest in and adapt to digital trends in order to sustain and improve their market position. By using these digital technologies, businesses can overcome obstacles, take advantage of chances for expansion, and establish a competitive advantage in the culinary industry.

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