

SWOT-Based Strategic Development for Enhancing MSMEs Digital Marketing Performance in Banda Aceh

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Abstract—This study identifies the internal and external factors influencing the digital marketing performance of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Banda Aceh to formulate a context-based strategic roadmap for improving digital competitiveness. The research addresses a gap left by previous studies, which focused primarily on individual platform use and sales outcomes, overlooking digital capability management as an applied information systems issue. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study involved 9 MSME owners from the culinary, fashion, and service sectors, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, digital content observations, marketplace platforms, and document reviews. The analysis used thematic coding consisting of open, axial, and selective coding, with results mapped into a SWOT matrix. Findings indicate that the primary strengths lie in cultural storytelling, adaptability to trends, and customer loyalty. At the same time, the weaknesses include unstructured content management, weak visual branding, limited understanding of analytics, and low cybersecurity awareness. Externally, opportunities arise from government training and digital payment adoption, whereas threats include algorithmic changes and account security risks. The study contributes by repositioning digital marketing as a digital capability management problem and providing strategic guidance for MSME owners, local governments, and supporting institutions to foster sustainable digital transformation in regional contexts.

Index Terms—Digital marketing, MSMEs, strategic development, SWOT analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in Indonesia's economic structure, contributing 61% to the national GDP and accounting for

nearly 97% of the workforce [1]. In Banda Aceh, MSMEs are predominantly concentrated in the culinary, fashion, and service sectors, forming the backbone of local economic activity. At the same time, the rapid growth of digital technology has expanded opportunities for MSMEs by enabling cost-efficient market penetration through social media, e-commerce, and online promotional platforms [2], [3]. For many MSMEs, digital channels are no longer simply optional marketing tools but have become essential components of how businesses manage customer communication, product visibility, transactions, and competitive positioning.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of MSMEs in Banda Aceh, with the culinary sector (32.83%) dominating, followed by fashion (21.01%) and services (18.38%), while manufacturing and agribusiness represent smaller proportions. These sectors depend heavily on digital visibility, customer engagement, visual communication, and rapid adaptation to market trends.

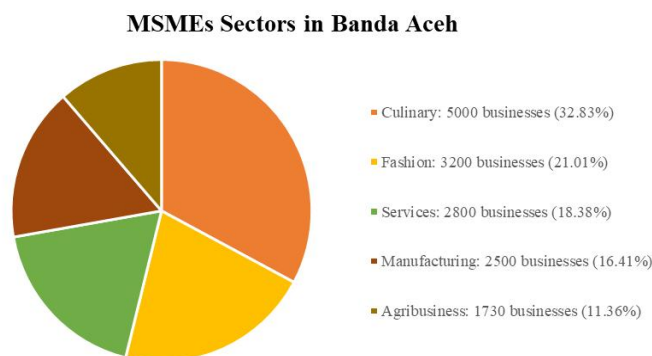


Fig. 1. MSMEs data of Banda Aceh city.

Against this background, two practical problems become evident. First, despite the expansion of social media and e-commerce, many MSMEs still use digital platforms operationally rather than strategically. Their digital activities are often characterized by irregular posting, weak visual identity, limited use of audience analytics, and poor integration among promotion, communication, and transaction channels [4], [5]. Second, in regions such as Banda Aceh, where digital

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transformation is still developing, these weaknesses limit MSMEs' ability to convert platform access into sustainable business performance.

Prior research has established that digital platforms can support MSME performance. For example, Tarso demonstrates that Instagram use significantly increases sales revenue among MSMEs in Sleman Regency, indicating that platform-specific engagement can directly influence business performance [6]. Another study analyzed the integration of TikTok and Shopee-based digital marketing strategies and found significant performance improvements [7]. Other study found that innovation capability strengthens the effect of Instagram usage on MSME performance, but does not similarly moderate the impact of TikTok or Facebook. Their findings underscore how platform characteristics and innovation readiness influence the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies for MSMEs [8]. These studies clarify what is already known: digital media matters for MSMEs and can contribute positively to business performance when used actively.

What remains insufficiently known is how MSMEs in resource-constrained local settings organize multiple digital activities, including content planning, analytics interpretation, customer interaction, platform coordination, and trust management, into an integrated capability system. Most prior studies do not simultaneously examine internal capability conditions and external ecosystem pressures, and evidence from secondary cities such as Banda Aceh remains limited. This phenomenon is the specific research gap addressed in the present study.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to convert fragmented digital practices into a manageable digital capability configuration that can improve MSME competitiveness in an emerging local economy. To address this urgency, this study examines MSME digital marketing as a managerial configuration of tools, information flows, and routines rather than a single promotional channel. The article contributes by offering a contextualized framework that explains how internal strengths and weaknesses interact with external opportunities and threats to shape digital capability development in Banda Aceh.

Accordingly, this study has two objectives: (1) to identify the internal and external factors affecting MSME digital marketing performance from an applied information systems perspective, and (2) to formulate strategic priorities for improving content management, analytics use, platform orchestration, and digital trust. The expected benefits are twofold: academically, the study strengthens the relevance of applied information systems and management research for MSME digital capability; practically, it provides strategic guidance for MSME owners, local government, and support institutions. These contributions are expected to support more informed decision-making and foster sustainable digital transformation among MSMEs in regional contexts such as Banda Aceh.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews the literature on digital marketing performance and

SWOT analysis. Section III explains the research method. Section IV presents the results and discussion, including the SWOT-based strategic analysis and conceptual model. The final section presents the conclusion, implications, limitations, and future research directions.

II. RELATED WORK

A. Digital Marketing Performance

Digital marketing performance refers to the effectiveness of an organization's efforts in utilizing digital platforms to achieve objectives such as customer acquisition, engagement, conversion, and brand strengthening [9]. Leonidas and Alexandra emphasize that digital marketing performance is determined by how efficiently businesses integrate digital tools, data analytics, and insights into online consumer behavior into their marketing activities [10]. For MSMEs, especially in developing regions, digital marketing performance is often shaped by their ability to produce consistent, relevant content, manage social media interactions, and use analytics to evaluate audience responses [11]. Effective digital marketing development among MSMEs requires strong stakeholder engagement, with coordinated efforts among the government, institutions, and local communities to ensure sustainability and maximize economic impact [12].

Several studies highlight that digital marketing contributes significantly to market expansion and cost-effective promotion. However, these benefits are often constrained by limited digital literacy, inadequate content quality, and an inconsistent online presence [13]. These barriers limit MSMEs' ability to use digital platforms effectively and enhance business performance. This fact highlights the need to consider both internal capabilities and external conditions when analyzing digital marketing performance and formulating strategic recommendations [14]. Consequently, digital marketing performance should be viewed not merely as platform usage outcomes, but as a reflection of how MSMEs manage digital resources and processes. It depends on internal capabilities in planning, executing, and evaluating content strategies [13], which are particularly critical for Banda Aceh's MSMEs, where competitiveness relies on visibility, cultural differentiation, and responsiveness to digital trends.

B. SWOT Analysis

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a strategic planning framework used to assess internal and external factors that influence organizational performance [16]. SWOT enables organizations to identify competitive advantages (strengths), internal limitations (weaknesses), environmental benefits (opportunities), and market risks (threats) [17], [18], [19]. As a diagnostic tool, SWOT analysis provides a structured foundation for formulating strategies that align organizational capabilities with external conditions [20]. The SWOT analysis matrix, adapted from [16]–[20], is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

SWOT Matrix

Internal/External Factors	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Opportunities (O)	SO Strategies (Using strengths to seize opportunities)	WO Strategies (Overcoming weaknesses by using opportunities)
Threats (T)	ST Strategies (Using strengths to counteract threats)	WT Strategies (Minimizing weaknesses and avoiding threats)

In the context of MSME digital marketing, the SWOT analysis is relevant because the challenges faced by MSMEs do not arise solely from internal limitations but also from rapid changes in the external digital ecosystem. Through this approach, the study provides a comprehensive mapping of MSME conditions in Banda Aceh while formulating digital marketing strategies aligned with local characteristics, technological capabilities, and the dynamics of the Aceh digital market. The effectiveness of these strategies depends on the readiness of MSMEs and users to engage with technology, supported by system usability and external factors such as infrastructure and technical support [21].

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The study employs a descriptive, qualitative approach to examine how MSMEs in Banda Aceh manage their digital marketing practices and to formulate a strategic framework based on internal and external factors affecting their performance. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument by engaging directly with the research subjects [22]. A qualitative design was selected because the study seeks to understand processes, capabilities, and constraints that cannot be adequately captured by platform-based performance indicators alone.

The population of this study comprises MSMEs in Banda Aceh, with a focus on the culinary, fashion, and service sectors, as these are the dominant sectors of local MSME activity. The sample comprised nine MSME owners, with three informants from each sector, selected through purposive sampling. Informants were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) they actively operated an MSME in Banda Aceh; (2) they represented one of the three dominant sectors; (3) they had conducted digital marketing activities through at least one digital platform such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp Business, or a marketplace; and (4) they had operated their businesses long enough to explain their marketing practices and challenges in a reflective manner. The selection of nine informants was intended to ensure sectoral representation while providing sufficient depth for cross-case comparison. Data collection was stopped when the interviews produced recurring patterns across informants, and no substantially new themes emerged.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews that focused on social media usage, content creation

processes, branding capabilities, audience analysis, and strategic challenges in digital marketing. All responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. In addition to interviews, we conducted direct observations of digital activities on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and various marketplace channels. The observations focused on elements including posting consistency, visual presentation quality, narrative coherence, responsiveness to customer inquiries, and the use of digital features such as insight analytics, paid promotions, delivery services, and influencer collaborations.

Secondary data were also obtained from government documents, MSME reports, and scientific references related to digital marketing, MSMEs, and business strategy. These sources provided essential contextual information on policy support, sectoral distribution, digital adoption trends, and theoretical foundations, thereby strengthening the analysis and supporting the interpretation of the qualitative findings in this study.

The analysis used thematic coding in four stages. It was conducted manually using a spreadsheet-based coding matrix, as the dataset was relatively small and allowed for a close case-by-case comparison. First, interview transcripts, observational notes, and supporting documents were reduced and read repeatedly to identify relevant statements. Second, open coding was conducted to capture recurring issues, including content inconsistency, branding problems, limited use of analytics, customer trust, platform dependence, and security concerns. Third, related codes were grouped through axial coding into broader digital capability themes. Fourth, selective coding was used to map these themes into internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats), which were then organized into the SWOT matrix.

The categorized data were then used to construct a SWOT matrix, which served as the basis for formulating strategic recommendations. Each SWOT dimension was examined to identify cross-case patterns and relationships between internal capability conditions and external digital ecosystem dynamics. The resulting SO (Strengths-Opportunities), WO (Weaknesses-Opportunities), ST (Strengths-Threats), and WT (Weaknesses-Threats) strategies were formulated by integrating internal resources with external conditions, ensuring the recommendations remained practical and contextually relevant to MSMEs in Banda Aceh.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied source triangulation by comparing interview data with observed digital activities and secondary documents. Themes were retained only when supported by consistent evidence across sources, while discrepancies were re-examined to maintain alignment with the data. An audit trail documenting coding, category development, and SWOT mapping was also maintained to enhance transparency and analytical reliability.

This methodological design was selected to provide a more rigorous and contextually grounded understanding of MSME digital marketing capability in Banda Aceh. By combining purposive sampling, thematic coding, and systematic triangulation, the study provides a stronger analytical basis for identifying the internal and external factors that shape digital marketing performance and for formulating strategic recommendations relevant to local MSME conditions.

IV. RESULT

A. SWOT Analysis

Interviews were conducted with nine MSME actors drawn from the culinary, fashion, and service sectors, representing the dominant business categories within Banda Aceh's MSME landscape. The interview data, supported by digital activity observations and document reviews, were analyzed through thematic coding and then mapped into SWOT dimensions.

Table 2 summarizes the key internal and external factors identified across informants, highlighting cultural storytelling, responsiveness to trends, and customer trust as major strengths. At the same time, weaknesses include fragmented content planning, inconsistent branding, limited use of analytics, and low digital-security awareness. A cross-sector insight shows

that cultural capital remains strong despite weak digital literacy: MSMEs can effectively convey product identity but struggle to translate it into consistent, data-driven content. Service MSMEs demonstrate stronger customer responsiveness and testimonial-based trust, whereas culinary and fashion MSMEs are more trend-sensitive but less consistent in branding and analytics use. This pattern reinforces the idea that MSME digital performance depends on the effective orchestration of content, information, and interaction routines, rather than mere platform presence.

B. Strategic Implications

Based on the thematic findings in Table 2, the SWOT matrix classifies internal and external factors while illustrating their strategic linkages. It shows how strengths and weaknesses interact with opportunities and threats to generate relevant and feasible priority actions for MSMEs in Banda Aceh. Field evidence further indicates that WO and WT strategies are the most urgent starting points, as these weaknesses were consistently identified across informants. Accordingly, the SWOT matrix in Table 3 serves as a decision-support framework for prioritizing MSME digital capability development.

Table 2.
Interview results of Banda Aceh MSMEs Actors

Informant of Banda Aceh MSME Actors	Internal Factors		External Factors	
	Strength (S)	Weakness (W)	Opportunity (O)	Threat (T)
Culinary – K1 (Baiturrahman District)	The business has strong cultural storytelling that attracts customers, especially when showcasing Acehese culinary traditions.	Digital content is posted irregularly due to limited time for managing both production and marketing.	Increasing numbers of consumers are seeking food recommendations on Instagram and TikTok.	Changes in social media algorithms can significantly reduce content visibility and engagement.
Culinary – K2 (Krueng Barona Jaya District)	The business can quickly create menu variations in response to emerging food trends.	Skills in producing appealing visual and video content are still limited.	Food delivery services and marketplace features provide easier access to online buyers.	Trending food products from outside Aceh often become strong competitors.
Culinary – K3 (Kuta Alam District)	Strong customer loyalty from the local community helps ensure steady sales.	The owner is still unfamiliar with interpreting social media analytics to evaluate content performance.	Government agencies increasingly offer training programs for MSMEs.	More new businesses offering similar menu items are entering the market.
Fashion – F1 (Ulee Kareng District)	The business can adapt quickly to fashion trends	The brand lacks a clear visual identity, resulting in inconsistent branding.	TikTok Shop offers visibility even for small brands without large advertising budgets.	Established fashion brands dominate the digital space with strong paid advertising strategies.
Fashion – F2 (Lueng Bata District)	The business has a good reputation and is well known among the Acehese.	The owner still relies on traditional marketing methods rather than digital innovations.	Using influencer marketing strategies and digital advertising can increase customer engagement.	The rise of low-priced imported clothing reduces the competitiveness of local products.
Fashion – F3 (Darussalam District)	The business offers modest fashion designs rooted in Acehese cultural identity.	Limited access to professional photography tools affects the visual quality of product displays.	The growing demand for modest fashion online increases sales potential.	Rapidly changing fashion trends make some designs quickly outdated.
Services – J1 (Syiah Kuala District)	Customer testimonials and before-and-after visuals effectively build trust among new clients.	The business has limited skills in developing persuasive captions and attractive digital visuals.	The increasing adoption of digital payments opens up new opportunities for digital marketing strategies.	Hacked business accounts raise concerns about digital security.
Services – J2 (Meuraxa District)	Fast, responsive customer communication via WhatsApp enhances client trust.	The absence of structured content planning leads to irregular promotional activities.	Educational posts, such as tips and tutorials, generally receive positive engagement.	Constant shifts in customer preferences require frequent adaptation to new trends.

Table 3.
SWOT Matrix

		Internal	External
		Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Opportunities (O)	1.	Develop culture-based storytelling content for TikTok/Instagram.	1. Join government/private digital marketing training to improve branding, analytics, and design skills.
	2.	Respond quickly to trends with new menus/fashion designs.	2. Implement structured content scheduling/calendars to improve posting consistency.
Threats (T)	3.	Encourage user-generated content from loyal customers.	3. Use influencer marketing and digital ads to increase visibility.
	4.	Promote Acehnese cultural identity to attract online audiences.	4. Utilize marketplace and delivery platforms to compensate for limited visual skills.
Opportunities (O)	5.	Use testimonials and educational content to strengthen digital trust.	5. Improve content quality using online tools (Canva, CapCut) and tutorials.
	1.	Differentiate products through Acehnese cultural uniqueness.	1. Diversify digital platforms (TikTok, Facebook, Google Business Profile, marketplace).
Threats (T)	2.	Leverage strong customer loyalty to reduce algorithm impact.	2. Apply cybersecurity practices (two-factor authentication, password rotation).
	3.	Continuously update products to keep up with rapid trends.	3. Formalize brand identity guidelines for consistent communication.
Opportunities (O)	4.	Use testimonials to counter potential negative reviews.	4. Establish regular posting schedules to maintain relevance.
	5.	Highlight product authenticity to withstand competition from imported goods.	5. Improve product photography and visual quality to compete with stronger brands.

In analytical terms, SO strategies exploit existing relational and cultural assets; WO strategies address capability gaps through training and low-cost tools; ST strategies protect competitiveness in unstable platform environments; and WT strategies reduce operational vulnerability through standardization and cyber hygiene. The sequence is also important: WO and WT strategies create the operational discipline that allows SO and ST strategies to generate stronger long-term impact.

1) Strengths-Opportunities (SO) Strategy Analysis

These SO pairings are justified as key strengths: cultural narratives, adaptability, and customer trust align with opportunities in social commerce discovery, the rising demand for local products, and expanding digital payments.

- Enhancement of digital storytelling: The first SO priority is to translate Acehnese cultural narratives into systematic storytelling on TikTok and Instagram. This fact goes beyond promotion by codifying local knowledge into repeatable digital content that enhances authenticity [23],[24].
- Acceleration of trend-responsive innovation: MSMEs that adapt quickly can use short-form video platforms as informal market intelligence systems, allowing timely adjustments to menus or fashion [25].
- Optimization of community-based engagement: Customer loyalty should be translated into user-generated content workflows, such as reviews and reposts, which function as low-cost social proof [26], [26], [28].
- Strengthening of cultural differentiation: By framing Acehnese identity as a unique digital proposition, MSMEs can compete beyond price [29], [24], [30].
- Integration of trust-building content: For service MSMEs, testimonial and educational content strengthens digital trust in an online-dependent economy [31], [31].

2) Weaknesses-Opportunities (WO) Strategy Analysis

In practice, WO strategies are the most urgent because the primary issue across cases is not a lack of opportunity but weak operational routines.

- Capacity-building through digital training: MSMEs should engage in community training to strengthen branding, content creation, and analytics [29], [33], [32].
- Structured digital content management: Implementing content calendars improves consistency and algorithmic visibility [34], [35].
- Adoption of influencer and paid media strategies: Collaboration with micro-influencers can accelerate audience acquisition more efficiently than organic reach alone [28], [36].
- Utilization of marketplace ecosystems: Platforms like TikTok Shop provide built-in visibility that compensates for limited visual production skills [33], [37].
- Improvement of content quality through digital tools: Tools such as Canva and CapCut help MSMEs elevate visual standards without significant investment [38].

3) Strengths-Threats (ST) Strategy Analysis

ST strategies leverage existing strengths as protective assets in volatile digital environments.

- Competition: The uniqueness of Acehnese products provides a competitive advantage against generic national brands [39], [40].
- Loyalty-based resilience to algorithm changes: Strong customer relationships reduce dependence on algorithms, as MSMEs can maintain reach through WhatsApp and community networks [41].
- Agile product updates: Rapid modifications mitigate the risks associated with changing consumer preferences [33].
- Leveraging credibility to counter negative reviews: Testimonials operate as buffers against reputational impact

[42], [43].

- Promotion of authenticity: Emphasizing the handmade value helps justify prices relative to lower-cost alternatives [39], [43].

4) *Weaknesses-Threats (WT) Strategy Analysis*

WT strategies serve as baseline risk controls by addressing internal fragility and external volatility.

- Diversification of digital platforms: MSMEs should expand their presence across multiple channels to avoid dependency on a single algorithm [41], [45].
- Strengthening cybersecurity practices: Two-factor authentication is essential to combat digital fraud [38].
- Development of brand identity guidelines: Establishing visual standards helps MSMEs remain competitive against national brands [46], [47].
- Regularization of posting routines: Consistent content production reduces the risk of losing relevance [34], [37].
- Upgrading visual content capabilities: Investing in basic lighting and smartphone enhancements keeps brands visually competitive [46], [47].

C. *Conceptual Model*

The proposed conceptual model explains MSME digital competitiveness through five interconnected capabilities.

1) *Internal capability enhancement*

- Strengthen basic digital skills such as content creation and analytics interpretation.
- Establish clear brand identity elements (visual style, tone, and logo consistency).
- Improve content quality using accessible digital tools.
- Maintain agility in adapting product designs and menu variations.

2) *Platform optimization and market expansion*

- Expand multi-platform presence across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, marketplaces, and Google Business Profile.
- Synchronize content across platforms to build a cohesive digital presence.
- Utilize marketplace and delivery-app features to enhance accessibility.
- Encourage community engagement through customer reviews and user-generated content.

3) *Cultural value amplification*

- Highlight Acehnese cultural identity as a unique selling proposition.
- Use cultural storytelling to create emotional connections.
- Link products to tourism narratives to attract wider digital audiences.

4) *Digital trust and relationship management*

- Strengthen trust by showcasing testimonials and customer reviews.
- Provide educational content to position MSMEs as credible sources.
- Maintain responsive communication via WhatsApp Business and social media.
- Integrate secure digital payment methods.

5) *Risk mitigation and sustainability practices*

- Implement cybersecurity measures, such as two-factor authentication.
- Reduce dependence on a single platform by diversifying.
- Maintain regular posting routines to stay relevant amid algorithm changes.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, this study finds that MSME digital marketing performance in Banda Aceh is shaped more by the maturity of digital capabilities than by simple platform adoption. Across nine purposively selected informants, the most consistent strengths were cultural storytelling, trend responsiveness, and customer trust. In contrast, the most recurrent weaknesses were fragmented content routines, weak branding, limited use of analytics, and low cybersecurity readiness. These conditions led to four strategic groups: SO strategies for growth through cultural storytelling and engagement; WO strategies for capability upgrading through training and structured content management; ST strategies for defending competitiveness through differentiation and credibility; and WT strategies for reducing operational risk through standardization and cyber hygiene.

Theoretically, this study extends MSME digital marketing research by framing it as an applied information systems capability configuration that integrates content management, analytics, platform coordination, and trust mechanisms, rather than treating it as isolated platform use. It also offers a context-based explanation of how local cultural assets and external digital ecosystems jointly shape the development of digital capability in emerging local economies.

Practically, the implications vary by stakeholder. MSME owners should prioritize feasible near-term actions, such as content calendars, basic analytics, brand guidelines, and account security, to build an operational foundation for growth. Local governments should focus on integrated training that combines branding, analytics, and cyber awareness, rather than solely on digital onboarding. Meanwhile, training institutions and support organizations should apply the conceptual model to deliver sector-sensitive assistance linking storytelling, platform integration, trust building, and risk mitigation.

This study has limitations because it uses a small purposive sample from one city and three sectors, capturing conditions at one point in time. Future research should quantitatively validate the model, compare regions or sectors, examine capability-performance relationships, and use longitudinal or platform data to track strategic evolution.

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