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Social Media-Based Marketing Strategies and Their Impact on SME Sales Growth in Jember

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of social media-based marketing strategies on the sales growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Jember Regency. In the era of digital transformation, social media has emerged as a strategic platform for businesses to reach broader consumer segments, strengthen customer relationships, and improve market competitiveness. This research adopts a quantitative approach using a survey method. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 120 SME owners and managers in Jember Regency who actively utilize social media as a marketing channel. The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between social media marketing strategies and sales growth. The findings reveal that social media-based marketing strategies have a positive and statistically significant effect on SME sales growth. The results suggest that effective social media use contributes to increased customer engagement, broader market penetration, and enhanced business performance. SMEs that consistently implement digital marketing practices tend to experience higher sales growth than those with limited social media activity. These findings highlight the strategic importance of optimizing social media platforms as an integral component of business development in the digital economy. The practical implications of this study emphasize the need for SMEs to prioritize high-quality content creation, maintain active customer interaction and maximize the use of paid advertising features to improve promotional effectiveness and market reach. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing by providing empirical evidence regarding the role of social media in supporting sustainable sales growth among SMEs in developing regions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in strengthening Indonesia's economy. They play a significant role in generating employment, alleviating poverty, and enhancing local economic stability [1], [2], [3]. In recent years, the SME sector has experienced rapid expansion. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of the Republic of Indonesia [4], there are over 65 million SME units in the country, which account for approximately 97% of the national workforce. This contribution to the economy is also evident at the regional level, particularly in Jember Regency, East Java, where SMEs have flourished across sectors such as culinary, fashion, handicrafts, and agro-processing [5], [6], [7]. This indicates that Jember is home to around 647,000 SME units, underscoring its significance as a key area for SME development within East Java

Despite robust SME growth, they continue to face structural challenges, especially in market competitiveness [8], [9]. A considerable number of SMEs still depend on traditional marketing methods such as word-of-mouth, offline sales, and conventional distribution channels [10], [11]. In an increasingly dynamic and competitive market environment, these strategies often fall short [12], [13]. This challenge is particularly pronounced in the context of globalization and digital transformation, where consumer purchasing behaviours have shifted markedly towards digital platforms [14], [15]. Today's consumers tend to seek product information online, compare prices digitally, and heavily rely on reviews and recommendations shared via social media [16], [17]. This trend underscores that digital interaction has transitioned from a supplementary aspect to a central component of consumer decision-making processes [18], [19].

The surge in digitalization in Indonesia further propels this transformation [20], [21]. The rise in internet penetration and smartphone usage continues unabated, positioning social media as one of the most effective channels for SMEs to reach broader markets [21], [17]. The country boasts over 175 million internet users, illustrating that social media has emerged as a highly pertinent medium for communication, promotion, and business transactions [22], [16]. This digital ecosystem offers SMEs the opportunity to transcend local market constraints, reduce marketing expenses, and foster closer consumer engagement [23], [17].

From a marketing-theory perspective, social media marketing can be viewed as an integral part of a contemporary relationship-based marketing strategy [24], [25]. Social media facilitates two-way communication between businesses and consumers, enabling SMEs to cultivate interactive relationships rather than merely disseminating promotional messages [18]¸ [15]. Tuten and Solomon [26] assert that social media serves not only as a promotional channel but also as a strategic platform for enhancing customer relationships and shaping purchase intentions. This suggests that SMEs that effectively leverage social media can foster customer trust, engagement, and loyalty—crucial elements for sustained sales performance [17], [14], [27].

In practice, marketing strategies centered on social media are widely implemented through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business. For example, Instagram offers significant advantages for visual marketing, enabling SMEs to showcase products through images and short videos, thereby enhancing product appeal and brand identity. In consumer psychology, visual content can evoke emotional connections and prompt impulsive buying decisions. Strauss and Frost [28] highlight that storytelling-based marketing on social media can enhance consumer engagement and create a deeper meaning around brands, particularly when SMEs share narratives about product uniqueness, production processes, and local cultural identity.

TikTok has also emerged as a formidable platform, thanks to its algorithm-driven content distribution and viral short-video format. SMEs can creatively market their products through tutorials, reviews, entertainment content, and customer testimonials. These marketing approaches align with the concept of digital engagement, where capturing consumer attention relies not solely on information dissemination but also on delivering entertaining and relatable content. Consequently, social media marketing strategies necessitate that SMEs be adaptable, innovative, and consistent in producing content that resonates with their target audiences.

However, the effectiveness of social media marketing is not solely contingent upon the choice of platform. It also hinges on strategic consistency, responsiveness, and the utilization of paid promotions. Evans [29] and Smith and Zook [30] explain that maintaining consistency in posting frequency cultivates consumer expectations and reinforces brand recall. Simultaneously, responsiveness to customer interactions, such as replying to comments or messages, plays a significant role in fostering customer satisfaction and trust. In the digital age, consumers expect prompt responses, making customer interaction a crucial element of successful digital marketing. Moreover, using paid advertising enables SMEs to reach segmented audiences more accurately through demographic and interest-based targeting. Fahrudi et al. [17] underscore that targeted advertising substantially enhances campaign effectiveness, as marketing messages are directed to audiences with a higher likelihood of purchasing.

The significance of social media marketing strategies becomes even more pronounced when correlated with the sales growth of SMEs. Sales growth transcends mere turnover increases; it also serves as a barometer of sustainable business performance [16] and [19] indicate that sales growth can be measured by rising customer numbers, increased transaction frequency, and enhanced customer loyalty. This implies that sales growth is closely tied to customer experience, product satisfaction, and repeat purchasing behaviour. SMEs that adeptly integrate marketing strategies with customer relationship management are more likely to achieve consistent growth.

Numerous empirical studies have established a positive correlation between social media marketing and SME performance. Kumar and Reinartz [31] found that SMEs in East Java experienced notable sales improvements through the utilization of social media, primarily due to expanded market reach and heightened consumer interaction. Chaffey [32] further contends that active engagement on social media boosts brand awareness and purchase intentions, thereby directly translating into improved sales outcomes. International research corroborates these findings. Demonstrate that social media marketing enhances small business performance by accelerating information dissemination and driving service innovation. Even reported that SMEs that employ strategic social media practices can achieve sales growth rates up to twice those of those relying on traditional marketing methods.

Nevertheless, despite the mounting evidence, challenges persist in the effective implementation of digital marketing strategies. Emphasize that SMEs frequently face limitations in human resources, digital literacy, and technological skills, hindering their ability to optimize digital platforms fully. This issue is particularly relevant in many developing regions, including Indonesia, where SME owners may have access to social media yet lack sufficient knowledge regarding content management, paid advertising, consumer analytics, and digital branding.

In Jember Regency, while SMEs continue to experience significant growth, the use of social media as a strategic marketing tool remains inconsistent. Some SMEs have actively embraced platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp Business, while others still rely on traditional selling methods. Although the SME sector in Jember is extensive and diverse, there is a dearth of studies specifically examining the relationship between social media-based marketing strategies and SME sales growth within this region. Previous research often addresses broader contexts, either at the East Java level or on a national scale, leaving local empirical evidence from Jember insufficiently explored.

In addition to addressing this research gap, the present study offers a specific contribution to the existing literature. Unlike previous studies that have predominantly examined the relationship between social media marketing and SME performance at broader regional or national levels, this study focuses on Jember Regency, an area with a rapidly growing and diverse SME sector. Furthermore, this research integrates four key dimensions of social media marketing strategy, such as content quality, posting frequency, customer interaction, and paid advertising, into a unified analytical framework. By doing so, the study provides localized empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of social media marketing in enhancing SME sales growth and contributes to a better understanding of digital marketing practices in developing regional economies.

In light of this background, the objective of this study is to analyze the effect of social media-based marketing strategies on the sales growth of SMEs in Jember Regency. The anticipated findings are expected to serve as a valuable reference for SMEs to optimize their social media use by improving content quality, maintaining consistent posting, fostering interactive consumer engagement, and targeting digital advertising.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a survey method to examine the effect of social media-based marketing strategies on the sales growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Jember Regency, Indonesia. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to objectively and systematically explain relationships between variables.

The study population consisted of SMEs in Jember Regency that actively use social media as a marketing platform. Social media has become an essential marketing channel for SMEs due to its ability to facilitate communication with customers, expand market reach, and promote products at relatively low costs compared to conventional marketing methods.

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the study's objectives. The criteria included SME owners or managers who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp Business, and TikTok to market their products or services. A total of 120 respondents participated in the study.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to measure two main variables. The independent variable (X) was Social Media-Based Marketing Strategy, measured through four indicators: content quality, posting frequency, customer interaction, and paid advertising. The dependent variable (Y) was Sales Growth, measured using revenue growth, customer growth, and purchase frequency.

Data were collected using a questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to hypothesis testing, the validity and reliability of the research instrument were assessed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Cronbach's Alpha. A Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.70 was considered acceptable.

Furthermore, classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the suitability of the regression model. The normality test was performed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, while heteroscedasticity was examined using the Glejser test. Since this study utilized simple linear regression with a single independent variable, multicollinearity testing was not required. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analysis. Hypothesis testing was conducted using a t-test at the 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to assess the extent to which social media marketing strategies explain variations in sales growth among SMEs.

Research Hypothesis

H1: Social media-based marketing strategies have a positive and significant effect on the sales growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Jember Regency.

Conceptual Framework

Social Media-Based Marketing Strategy (Content Quality, Posting Frequency, Customer Interaction, Paid Advertising) → Sales Growth (Revenue Growth, Customer Growth, Purchase Frequency).

Operational Definition of Variables

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Scale
Social Media-Based Marketing Strategy	Content Quality	Informative, attractive, relevant content	Likert 1–5
	Posting Frequency	Consistency of content uploads	Likert 1–5
	Customer Interaction	Responses to comments and messages	Likert 1–5
	Paid Advertising	Use of sponsored advertisements	Likert 1–5
Sales Growth	Revenue Growth	Increase in revenue	Likert 1–5
	Customer Growth	Increase in customer numbers	Likert 1–5
	Purchase Frequency	Repeat purchase frequency	Likert 1–5

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Respondents

Respondent Characteristics

Based on the research findings, the majority of respondents were engaged in the culinary sector (45% of the total sample), followed by the fashion sector (30%) and the handicraft sector (25%). This distribution indicates that culinary businesses continue to dominate the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Jember Regency, driven by strong market demand for food and beverage products from both local consumers and tourists. The fashion sector ranked second, reflecting the growing demand for ready-to-wear clothing, local batik products, and fashion accessories. Meanwhile, the handicraft sector, although representing a smaller proportion of respondents, remains an important contributor to the local economy through culture-based creative products and souvenirs.

In terms of social media usage, Instagram (60%) and WhatsApp Business (55%) were the most frequently used digital marketing platforms. Facebook (35%) and TikTok (25%) were also utilized, although to a lesser extent. The dominance of Instagram and WhatsApp Business suggests that SMEs prefer platforms that facilitate both visual marketing and direct customer engagement. Instagram allows businesses to present attractive product images and videos, while WhatsApp Business supports personalized communication and customer relationship management.

The predominance of culinary SMEs may be attributed to relatively low entry barriers and the high demand for food-related products. Furthermore, culinary products are highly visual, making them particularly suitable for promotion on social media platforms. Consequently, the adoption of social media marketing strategies may generate a stronger influence on sales performance within this sector.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents Based on Business Sector and Social Media Platforms Used

Category	Percentage (%)	Description
Culinary	45%	Typical Jember food and beverage products dominate the market.
Fashion	30%	Includes ready-to-wear clothing, batik, and fashion accessories.
Handicrafts	25%	Creative products based on local culture, souvenirs, and handmade crafts.
Instagram	60%	Main platform for visual product promotion.
WhatsApp Business	55%	Medium for direct communication and customer service.
Facebook	35%	Used to reach a broader market segment.
TikTok	25%	Used for short-video promotional content.

Additional Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Table 3. Additional Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	56.7
Gender	Female	52	43.3
Age	20–30 years	35	29.2
Age	31–40 years	47	39.2
Age	>40 years	38	31.6
Business Duration	<3 years	30	25.0
Business Duration	3–5 years	46	38.3
Business Duration	>5 years	44	36.7

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents were male entrepreneurs (56.7%), while female entrepreneurs accounted for 43.3% of the sample. Most respondents were between 31 and 40 years old, indicating that SME owners in Jember are predominantly within their productive entrepreneurial age. Regarding business duration, the majority had operated their businesses for more than 3 years, suggesting that respondents had sufficient experience implementing social media marketing strategies.

Overall, the respondent profile indicates that SMEs in Jember have increasingly adopted digital platforms for their marketing activities. The high usage of Instagram and WhatsApp Business demonstrates the growing awareness among SME owners of the importance of digital marketing for expanding market reach and improving business performance. These findings provide an appropriate foundation for examining the influence of social media-based marketing strategies on SME sales growth.

Results of Statistical Analysis

Prior to hypothesis testing, validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests were conducted. The results indicated that all questionnaire items were valid and reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Furthermore, the normality and heteroscedasticity tests confirmed that the regression model met the necessary assumptions for statistical analysis.

Table 3 presents the results of the simple linear regression analysis examining the influence of social media-based marketing strategies on SME sales growth in Jember Regency.

Table 4. Statistical Analysis

Variable	Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig.	Interpretation
Social Media Marketing Strategy	0.685	6.732	0.000	Positive and Significant
Constant	12.450	2.315	0.027	Significant

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.470$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.465$; $F = 45.320$; Sig. = 0.000. The regression results indicate that social media-based marketing strategies have a positive and statistically significant effect on SME sales growth ($\beta = 0.685$; $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.470$) suggests that approximately 47% of the variation in sales growth is explained by social media marketing strategies, with the remaining 53% attributable to other factors not included in the model.

The findings demonstrate that social media-based marketing strategies significantly contribute to SME sales growth in Jember Regency. This result supports Relationship Marketing Theory, which emphasizes the importance of continuous interaction and engagement between businesses and customers in generating long-term value. Through platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp Business, SMEs can build closer relationships with consumers, increase customer trust, and encourage repeat purchases.

The findings are consistent with those of Sinaga et al. [33], who reported that social media use enhances SME sales performance by expanding market reach and improving customer interaction. Similarly, Zeqiri et al. [34] found that social media engagement strengthens brand awareness and purchase intention, both of which contribute directly to sales growth.

From the perspective of Digital Marketing Theory, social media functions not only as a communication channel but also as a strategic tool for market expansion and customer relationship management. The dominance of Instagram among respondents suggests that visual content plays a critical role in influencing consumer behavior and purchasing decisions.

However, the study also indicates that the effectiveness of social media marketing depends on internal organizational capabilities. Consistent with Taiminen and Karjaluoto [35], SMEs with limited digital literacy may struggle to maximize the potential of social media platforms. Therefore, managerial competence, content creativity, and technological adaptability remain important determinants of successful digital marketing implementation.

Overall, the results confirm that social media-based marketing strategies are an important driver of SME sales growth. Nevertheless, complementary factors such as product quality, pricing strategy, customer service, and business management practices should also be considered in future studies to provide a more comprehensive explanation of SME performance.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social media-based marketing strategies have a positive and significant effect on the sales growth of Small and Medium Enterprises

(SMEs) in Jember Regency. The regression analysis revealed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.47, indicating that social media marketing contributes substantially to SME sales performance. These findings confirm that social media functions not only as a promotional medium but also as a strategic tool for enhancing customer engagement, expanding market reach, and improving business outcomes. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on Relationship Marketing Theory and Digital Marketing Theory by providing empirical evidence from SMEs in Jember Regency. The findings suggest that effective social media utilization strengthens business-consumer relationships and supports sustainable sales growth. Practically, SMEs should prioritize high-quality content, consistent posting, active customer interaction, and digital advertising to maximize marketing effectiveness. Future research is recommended to include additional variables, such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, product quality, and innovation capability, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing SME sales growth.

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