

IDENTIFYING CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ADOPTION IN MICRO AND SMALL CULINARY BUSINESSES

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ABSTRACT

Background: With the culinary sector undergoing transformative shifts propelled by technological advancements and the ubiquity of social media, understanding the critical success factors for social media marketing becomes imperative for micro and small businesses.

Purpose: This study aims to identify and explore critical success factors for social media marketing adoption in micro and small culinary businesses.

Design/methodology/approach: Employing a qualitative approach, the research selected a purposive sample of six Indonesian owners of micro and small culinary businesses, playing pivotal roles in shaping business decisions. Semi-structured interviews conducted via telephone and Zoom Meetings formed the basis for data collection with owners and co-owners of micro and small businesses in the culinary Industry in West Java and East Borneo, Indonesia. The data collection focuses on the critical success factors of social media marketing. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed using a narrative approach.

Findings/Result: Five thematic outcomes were noted regarding the critical success factors of social media marketing: interaction, trendiness, persistency, curiosity, and entrepreneurial mindset. The study identifies the "entrepreneurial mindset" as a critical success factor, echoed by five out of six informants.

Conclusion: Critical factors that contribute to the success of adopting social media marketing for micro and small businesses integrate the entrepreneurial traits of the owners and managers and the effective utilization of social media marketing strategies.

Originality/value (State of the art): This study explores in depth the significance of the combination of entrepreneurial traits and effective utilization of social media marketing strategies which remain underexplored in the social media marketing study, particularly in micro and small businesses.

Keywords: culinary industry, micro and small business, social media, critical success factors, narrative approach

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INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, social media has emerged as an important platform for micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) seeking to expand their reach and engage with a broader audience. The ubiquity of social media in Indonesia, with a staggering 167 million users representing 60.4% of the total population (Kemp, 2023), unfolds a vast opportunity landscape for businesses. In recent times, the culinary industry has undergone notable transformations owing to the swift progress in technology (Libcralo et al. 2020). The culinary is the largest sub-sector in Indonesia which contributes 30% of the total revenue from the creative economy sector (Ministry of Tourism Republic of Indonesia, 2023), and is considered one of the fastest-growing sectors (Bastian & Fakhrudin, 2021). Recognizing this potential, the strategic deployment of Social Media Marketing becomes imperative for forging connections between Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the culinary industry and their prospective consumers.

Despite the huge potential brought by social media, SMEs grapple with challenges in adeptly navigating social media adoption and discerning business values relevant to their endeavors (Pervin & Sarker, 2021). Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive research focusing on the specific strategies that lead to success for MSMEs in the culinary industry (Pusung et al. 2023; Syahyono, 2022). These gaps need to be addressed given that understanding critical success factors in social media marketing on MSMEs can offer a more holistic approach to the sustainability and profitability of MSMEs, thus accentuating the importance of this study.

Success in social media for micro, small, and medium businesses is characterized by the ability to create meaningful connections with the target audience, effectively communicate the brand's value proposition, and foster a community around the brand, leading to tangible business outcomes such as higher conversion rates and customer retention (Cavaco, 2022; Qalati et al. 2022). The measurement of social media success for SMEs typically involves a combination of quantitative metrics (such as likes, shares, comments, website traffic, and conversion rates) and qualitative outcomes (such as customer satisfaction and brand perception) (Medjani et al. 2019).

In the context of the culinary industry, interaction, trends, and electronic word of mouth on consumer engagement, contribute to brand awareness and image (Ningrum & Roostika, 2021). Critical success factors in managing social media marketing also depend on the tools it utilizes as the strategy of each platform may differ and affect the success of social media marketing. For instance, Facebook can be utilized to interact, create, and share content with consumers, thus it is necessary to manage the corporate brand on Facebook to deliver the targeted message to the consumers (Donga et al. 2024)

Conversely, several studies have explored the utilization of Instagram as a strategic tool for business enhancement ((Wijayanto et al. 2022). Specifically, Instagram offers the potential to augment market share through the strategic employment of its functionalities, including increasing post frequency, leveraging unique Instagram features (e.g., Reels, filters, stories, IG shop), and engaging users through interactive activities such as quizzes, giveaways, and friend tagging (Wijayanto et al. 2022). Furthermore, A study on culinary business reported that Instagram serves as a cost-effective platform for reducing marketing expenses while simultaneously amplifying brand awareness and customer engagement. Additionally, the deployment of influencers has been recognized as an efficacious marketing tactic, albeit necessitating integration with the broader marketing mix to achieve optimal results (Hugh Wilkie et al. 2022).

Besides, in the dynamic and resource-constrained environment of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the success of social media marketing strategies extends beyond the mere understanding and application of digital tools. While the strategic deployment of social media is crucial for enhancing visibility, engagement, and ultimately business growth, the intrinsic characteristics of entrepreneurship play a pivotal role in navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital landscape. Persistence, curiosity, and an entrepreneurial mindset emerge as foundational traits that empower business owners to thrive under conditions of uncertainty and limited resources (Kollmann et al. 2022).

Persistence is the driving force that enables entrepreneurs to continually refine and adapt their social media strategies in response to feedback and changing market dynamics. This tenacity is essential

for overcoming the initial obstacles and setbacks that are often encountered when trying to establish a brand's digital presence (Pinchot III & Soltanifar, 2021).

Curiosity fuels the desire to explore innovative ways to engage with audiences and leverage new social media platforms or features. It encourages entrepreneurs to stay abreast of digital marketing trends and to experiment with creative content, thus ensuring that their marketing efforts remain fresh (Gross et al. 2020)

Lastly, an entrepreneurial mindset embodies the strategic vision and flexibility required to seize opportunities and pivot strategies when necessary. This mindset facilitates a proactive approach to social media marketing, where decisions are informed by data-driven insights and a deep understanding of the target audience (Soltanifar & Smailhodžić, 2021).

For MSMEs, these entrepreneurial traits are as critical as the strategies themselves, acting as the catalyst for sustainable growth and competitive advantage in a crowded digital marketplace. This symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurship and social media marketing underscores the notion that success in the digital age is not solely dependent on the tools one uses but also on the mindset and behaviors of the individuals wielding them (Olanrewaju et al. 2020).

The interplay between entrepreneurial traits and social media marketing strategies is of paramount importance for the success of micro and small businesses in today's business environment. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to explore the social media marketing factors that contribute to the performance of micro and small enterprises, examining the role of entrepreneurial traits in enhancing the effectiveness of these strategies, through the qualitative approach to obtain in-depth perspectives.

METHODS

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing semi-structured, in-depth interviews with six informants of micro and small culinary enterprises located in the provinces of East Borneo and West Java. Data collection occurred through purposive and convenience sampling from May to November 2022. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they serve as a comprehensive means of gathering rich data, allowing flexibility in questioning based on the researchers'

interests. Specifically, in this research, semi-structured interviews were utilized to delve into the perspectives of owners and co-owners concerning strategies and critical success factors in social media marketing.

The criterion for determining the appropriate informants refers to the definition of micro and small businesses according to the Central Bureaucratic Agency (BPS), whereby a micro business is a business that employs 1-4 people, and a small business is a business that employs 5-19 people (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). Since this study analyzed the critical success factors of social media marketing on micro and small businesses, it requires the business to have been operating for more than 3 years and has adopted social media for at least 1 year. (Sukmawati et al. 2023) stated that the informant should have technical and detailed knowledge of the study problem studied by the researcher. Thus, in this study, all the informants are owners and co-owners of micro and small businesses.

All selected owners were asked the same questions; however, they were interviewed at different times. Semi-structured interview questions were asked from participants, allowing a free flow of responses. Open-ended questionnaires and guidance for interviews with five categories were employed to obtain maximum information. The five categories include the profile of the participants, drivers of social media adoption, strategies, critical success factors, and general questions regarding the impact, benefits, and challenges.

The interview questions include, could you please provide an overview of your business? How long has it been established, how many employees do you have, and what products do you offer? how did your business first begin using social media for marketing purposes? Could you mention the types of social media-based technology you utilize in your business operations, and why did you choose them? How do you decide what type of content to post on your social media channels? From your experience, what are the critical success factors for effective social media marketing in micro and small businesses? Have you ever encountered any security or privacy issues through your social media activities? How did you handle them? How has customer feedback on social media influenced your business practices or product offerings? What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced in your social media marketing efforts, and how have you addressed them?

Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. After interviews were conducted, the recordings were then transcribed. The transcribed data were subsequently imported into NVivo, where the software facilitated the analysis and organization of the enormous amount of data. At this stage, all coded data were recovered from NVivo and were practically grouped. The codes that were further validated were then analysed and interpreted.

The collected data were evaluated based on the main themes that emerged, using the narrative analysis technique. Triangulation was involved, examining the interviews, and reviewing the company's data. The company data checking was conducted through content analysis, where crucial data were gathered. This included the number and content of posts on different

social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok. The overall process demonstrates how the research was analysed, verified, and reported by the researchers

RESULTS

The profile of the informants interviewed through Zoom or Telephone is illustrated in Table 1. Informants are selected based on the criteria of micro and small businesses in which they own or work. All the respondents are owners or co-owners of the businesses. The selection of informants who represent the business considers the fact that they are responsible for the business strategy of the company. Most of the respondents have an undergraduate level or at least a diploma with an age range of around 27-45 years old.

Table 1. Interviewees' Profile

Informants	Company	Description	Data collection
Informant 1	A	Role: Owner of the Company A Gender: Female Age: 45 years old Education: Diploma	Interview through Zoom
Informant 2	B	Role: Co-owner of the Company B Gender: male Age: 38 years old Education: Drop out of college	Interview through Zoom
Informant 3	C	Role: Co-owner of Company C Gender: Female Age: 40 years old Education: Undergraduate	Interview through Zoom
Informant 4	D	Role: Owner of the Company D Gender: male Age: 27 years old Education: Undergraduate	Telephone Interview & Qualitative Survey (open-ended questions)
Informant 5	E	Role: Owner of the Company E Gender: Female Age: 37 years old Education: Undergraduate	Telephone Interview
Informant 6	F	Role: Co-Owner of the Company F Gender: Female Age: 30 years old Education: Undergraduate	Telephone Interview & Qualitative Survey (open-ended questions)

Table 2 presents a comprehensive overview of the business profiles of the informants constituting the case studies. The inclusion of these companies was predicated upon a judicious assessment of their alignment concerning dimensions such as size, operational tenure, and utilization of social media platforms. It also describes the nature of their product offerings alongside the chronological span during which they have been in the industry and utilize social media. Based on the interview, each informant used social media marketing, varied from Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Instagram with Instagram being the most common social media platform.

The degree of utilization, however, differs among informants. For instance, Informant 1 primarily focuses on TikTok and Instagram for social media marketing. They consistently create and promote content daily following the company's established posting schedule. In contrast, Informant 3 has begun to pay more attention to enhancing her business's social media presence. However, she still regards Google Bisnisku and WhatsApp as the primary online marketing channels that directly contribute to sales. Informant 5 primarily relied on word-of-mouth referrals and food delivery applications for sales and marketing, though she still uses social media just to have an online presence and let people know about their product online.

Critical Success Factor of Social Media Marketing on MSMEs

Social media networks are digital environments where individuals and groups can interact and exchange experiences. Understanding critical success factors in social media marketing is essential as effective use of social media can lead to improved business performance both in operational and financial aspects (Subagja et al. 2022).

The study found that establishing a routine interaction with followers (customers and prospective customers) is vital in part of social media marketing. In addition, (Hidayanti et al. 2023) added that MSMEs should respond to customers quickly and responsively.

The interactions varied from replying to comments from posts or asking questions through a direct message on Instagram and joining in a live event on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. Relating this interaction

with the number of posts on social media shows that the number of posts and followers are aligned. Posting content on social media is one way to interact with buyers and prospective buyers (followers) (Aydin, 2020).

The combination of these respondent views generally assumes trendiness/virality as one of the critical success factors of social media marketing. This study is coherent with (Cheung et al. 2020, 2021) that interaction and trendiness are critical factors that influence consumer brand engagement resulting in increased awareness and knowledge of the brand, as well as shaping consumer behavior.

Wang et al. (2019) found that trendy information on social media includes surveillance, knowledge, pre-purchase information, and inspiration. This finding is relevant to Social Influence Theory about how people are impacted positively and negatively by various forms of social influence (Willis, 2021). Viral Music and Trending topics are forms of social influence. Thus, firms need to keep updated on the social environment of the target market, provide product reviews on communities to create pre-purchase information and inspire customers with the content they share.

Persistence leads to success in a way that overcomes discouragement and is aware of weaknesses, challenges, reasons for setbacks, and ways to stun any obstacles. By acknowledging weaknesses and challenges, businesses can proactively develop effective tactics and solutions to navigate the complexities of social media marketing. Moreover, persistence is an important trait in entrepreneurship which in this study is relevant since micro and small business is related to entrepreneurship. The study also found Curiosity as another critical factor that leads to success in social media marketing. Based on a psychological perspective, Curiosity is a vital stimulus for learning that involves pursuing new knowledge and experiences (Gross et al. 2020). According to (Syed et al. 2020), entrepreneurial curiosity is vital for innovativeness.

Curiosity plays an important role in determining the success of social media marketing for micro and small businesses. It awakens the exploration of innovative strategies, encourages experimentation with different content formats, and promotes a deeper understanding of target audiences.

Table 2. Interviewees' Business Profile

Participant	Business Profile	Social Media Profile (as per April 2023)
Company A (I1)	Company A is a small firm with leading products, including instant food and cookies. Company A has operated for more than 5 years and has focused on social media within the last five years.	Instagram: 4,731 followers, 2,639 posts TikTok: 685 followers 1622 likes
Company B (I2)	Company B is a small firm whose main product is Japanese food (Ramen). Company C has operated for over 5 years and started promoting through social media within the last 3 years.	Instagram: 12,300 followers, 1.348 posts TikTok: 35 followers, 95 likes
Company C (I3)	Company C is a small firm with the main product being a traditional cake from West Java. Company D has operated for over 20 years and started promoting through social media within the last 3 years.	Instagram: 1,984 followers, 89 posts TikTok: 38 followers, 28 likes
Company D (I4)	Company D is a small firm whose main product is snacks, shisha, and coffee. Company E has operated for over 5 years and started promoting through social media within the last 5 years.	Instagram: 3,547 followers, 449 posts TikTok: 12 followers, 23 likes
Company E (I5)	Company E is a small firm with the main product being Indonesian congee (Bandung style). Company E has operated for over 5 years and started promoting through social media within the last 5 years.	Instagram: Official - 100 followers, 8 posts Instagram: Owner – 808 followers, 258 posts
Company F (I6)	Company F is a small firm with the main product being flatbread (known as roti canai). Company E has operated for over 5 years and started promoting through social media within the last 3 years.	Instagram: Account for East Borneo area: 6 followers, 15 posts Instagram: Account for South Sulawesi area: 31 followers, 8 posts Instagram: Account for Jogjakarta area: 6 followers, 15 posts

Based on the responses from the two interviewees in this research, a generalized opinion can be formed that curiosity plays a pivotal role in the successful adoption and implementation of social media marketing strategies in businesses. These individuals indicate that their curiosity, especially regarding the strategies and successes of their competitors, motivated them to explore and adopt social media for their business endeavours. This curiosity not only led to the adoption of new marketing techniques but also helped them to keep pace with or even replicate the successful strategies of their competitors. Therefore, it can be concluded that a sense of inquisitiveness and a desire to understand and emulate successful practices in the market are key factors driving businesses towards effective utilization of social media marketing.

The study has identified having an entrepreneurial mindset also contribute to success in social media marketing for micro and small business. Most informants concurred that an entrepreneurial mindset, characterized by a keen eagerness to learn, the ability to seize opportunities, and perseverance in challenging situations, significantly contributes to achieving success. An entrepreneurial mindset implies a thinking

approach about business and its opportunities that optimize the benefits of uncertainty (Soltanifar & Smailhodžić, 2021).

From the statements of Informant 1 and Informant 2, a generalized opinion can be formed that highlights the entrepreneurial mindset characterized by adaptability, creativity, and a proactive approach to leveraging opportunities presented by the evolving landscape of social media. Informant 1's approach to embracing aesthetic videos and learning new tools like CupCut and Picsart showcases a willingness to adapt and innovate to keep up with trends. Similarly, Informant 2's pursuit of information for development and the decision to venture into social media for promotion reflects a forward-thinking and opportunistic approach. Both informants exemplify how an entrepreneurial mindset involves continuously seeking new ways to engage and adapt to the dynamic nature of social media, thereby optimizing the potential benefits amidst uncertainties. This suggests that success in the current digital era, particularly in the realm of social media marketing, is significantly influenced by the ability to creatively adapt and proactively embrace new opportunities for growth and engagement.

The results conclude that there are several critical success factors in social media marketing applied by micro and small businesses in the culinary industry in Indonesia. This clarifies why the previous authors have similar findings in their studies. One of the factors is maintaining active and interactive interaction with followers. This finding is coherent with previous findings. For instance, Zachlod et al. (2022) provided a model to measure social media use for corporations. In quantifying social media uses, they analysed how often the brand engages in social media activities, including text, images, videos, and job postings. They also consider the responses from followers, such as comments, shares, and 'likes'.

Besides, another study reported that the use of effective social media by updating posts with catchy phrases and attractive images as well as providing clear information will help to strategically use social media marketing (Losi et al. 2022). This shows that indicators in social media interaction are similar to this study. Furthermore, (Wang et al. 2019) applied the holistic concept of the five aspects of SMM, namely, interaction, entertainment, customization, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and trendiness.

Numerous research collectively shows that persistence plays a key role in achieving higher performance and success (Ahsan et al. 2021; Caliendo et al. 2020; Salisu et al. 2020). Persistence is a fundamental requirement for uncovering business opportunities, thus increasing its likelihood of achieving success (Caliendo et al. 2020). Additionally, (Zhang & Yamasaki, 2021) highlights the significance of consistency, particularly in marketing, emphasizing that regular and coherent social media posts help in increasing brand awareness, memorability, and consideration among customers. These concepts are echoed in the present study, where respondents acknowledge that persistence is a crucial trait that drives individuals to continue striving toward success without giving up.

Curiosity is one of the three keys to entrepreneurial success (Raine & Pandya, 2019). In this study, 50 % of the informants agreed that curiosity is one of the critical success factors as they become curious to implement new technology, and curious to observe competitors' strategies and consumer trends, thus leading to the success of the social media marketing practice.

Having an entrepreneurial mindset is a critical factor for the micro-success of small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Anthony et al. 2022; Farida et al. 2022). Entrepreneurs or individuals with this mindset perceive needs, problems, and challenges as opportunities and creatively devise solutions to overcome these challenges while capitalizing on and combining various opportunities (Purwati et al. 2020).

Furthermore, the entrepreneurial mindset is necessary to establish a competitive advantage (Farida et al. 2022). In this research, a significant 83.3% of participants concurred that possessing an entrepreneurial mindset is a key factor for success. This mindset, characterized by viewing uncertainties and challenges as opportunities, encourages them to embrace new endeavors, such as adopting technological innovations like social media marketing.

Looking at these findings, the purpose of this study has been served and referenced by the results above. The connection established between the findings of earlier researchers and the result of this study explains the consistency in the outcomes. This alignment demonstrates the reasons behind the similar results observed in previous studies.

Managerial Implication

Small businesses are different from large businesses as decisions in small businesses are made based on managers and owners, relatively for the short-term, while large businesses align the company's vision and mission with the business' long-term planning and strategy (Kumar et al. 2021). In line with the research by Kumar that states the characteristics of small businesses differ from large businesses, these findings suggest that success in micro and small businesses is primarily determined by entrepreneurship traits of the managers and owners of micro and small businesses as well as the utilization of effective social media marketing strategy.

Factors including eagerness to learn, ability to seize the opportunity, proactive, adaptability, and creativity are some of the entrepreneurial traits that contribute to the success of the adoption of social media marketing. Accordingly, businesses shall nurture these characteristics in the leaders and staffs.

Businesses aiming to enhance sales through social media should initially focus on maintaining interaction with customers and consider “viral/trending content” especially on platforms like Instagram, which are commonly used by those interviewed. In addition, considering TikTok’s popularity, it might be beneficial to explore its potential for sales growth as well.

Furthermore, recognizing the need for diverse skills and tools for effective optimization, investing in training and development programs for employees involved in social media management can be a valuable strategy. By acknowledging these trends and challenges, businesses can formulate a more informed and effective approach to utilizing social media for sales growth.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The primary objective of this research was to explore the key factors influencing the success of social media marketing strategies in Indonesia’s micro and small culinary businesses. The study identified several vital elements that enhance social media strategy effectiveness including engaging actively with users and followers, staying current with social media trends, consistently creating, and posting content, being persistent and highly curious about trending topics on social media, monitoring competitor activities, and possessing an entrepreneurial mindset. Furthermore, this research contributes to existing literature by providing insights into successful entrepreneurship through psychological entrepreneurship theory, personality trait theory, and human capital theory. Additionally, the study outlines a range of platforms and strategies employed by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in integrating social media into their business models.

Recommendations

This research centred mainly on micro and small enterprises within the culinary sector, which might not fully represent the broader adoption of social media marketing in Indonesia’s culinary industry. Future studies should broaden their scope to include different sectors and medium-sized businesses, which were not adequately covered in this study. Given the rapid and unpredictable nature of social media trends, these should be evaluated regularly.

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