# DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING CUSTOMER LOYALTY AMONG MSMES IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY ERA

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Abstract. In the era of the digital economy, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are required to adapt to the development of information technology in order to maintain competitiveness and increase customer loyalty. This study aims to examine effective digital marketing strategies for building and maintaining customer loyalty among MSMEs, with a focus on the use of social media, email marketing, and e-commerce platforms. The research method used is a literature review and a descriptive qualitative approach involving several MSMEs that have implemented these digital strategies. The results show that the use of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok can enhance emotional interaction between brands and customers. Email marketing is considered effective in maintaining long-term relationships through personalized messages and exclusive offers. Meanwhile, integration with e-commerce platforms provides convenience in transactions and creates an efficient and satisfying shopping experience. With the proper implementation of digital marketing strategies, MSMEs can significantly increase customer loyalty while expanding their market reach in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

**Keywords**: Customer Loyalty; Digital Marketing; E-commerce; Email Marketing; MSMEs; Social Media

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the ongoing digital revolution, the global business environment—including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)—has experienced a major shift in the way businesses connect with, attract, and retain their customers (Kingsnorth, 2022). The rise of the digital economy, driven by rapid technological progress, has pushed MSMEs to adopt modern marketing approaches that respond to changing consumer preferences, which now emphasize personalization, interaction, and added value (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017).

Not only enhancing brand awareness and driving sales but also in building customer loyalty—an essential factor for long-term success in today's competitive market (Kannan & Li, 2017). This marketing approach uses various digital tools and platforms to create meaningful connections between businesses and their audiences (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Common strategies include social media marketing, email campaigns, and leveraging e-commerce platforms, each playing a unique role in keeping customers engaged (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok offer interactive and visually rich experiences, enabling real-time engagement, emotional connections, and the development of online communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Constantinides, 2014). Although considered more traditional, email marketing continues to be highly effective by providing personalized and timely communication (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Meanwhile, e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and Tokopedia simplify the buying process and offer loyalty features like personalized product suggestions and rewards, which enhance customer satisfaction (Laudon & Traver, 2021; Chiu et al., 2012).

Despite these advantages, MSMEs often struggle not only to master digital tools but also to align them strategically to provide a smooth and engaging customer experience.

Winning customer loyalty goes beyond offering good prices or quality products—it involves consistently delivering relevant and enjoyable digital interactions (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2015). As digital marketing evolves into a two-way interaction, businesses need to adopt data-driven approaches and analyze customer behavior more effectively (Trainor et al., 2014).

Although digital marketing is widely recognized as essential, there is still limited understanding of how specific elements—like social media, email, and e-commerce—contribute to building customer loyalty in MSMEs, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. This study aims to explore how these channels work together to support continuous customer engagement and to uncover the real-world challenges MSMEs face in implementing them effectively (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015).

Given the critical role that MSMEs play in driving economic growth and creating employment (Kumar et al., 2010), this research emphasizes the importance of improving digital marketing knowledge and flexibility among MSMEs. These skills are vital for ensuring their sustainability and competitiveness in today's digital economy (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

#### 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Digital transformation has become a crucial necessity for MSMEs to stay relevant and competitive in today's market. By adopting digital tools, these businesses are not only able to reach broader audiences but also enhance their interactions with customers—something that plays a key role in building loyalty and long-term success (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994). Research consistently shows that loyal customers tend to make repeat purchases and often promote the brand voluntarily (Verhoef et al., 2015).

In this digital era, businesses—especially MSMEs—can no longer ignore the importance of going digital. Embracing digitalization helps widen market access and also supports the development of stronger customer loyalty, which is vital for ensuring long-term business sustainability (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). When customers feel emotionally connected and trust a brand, they are more likely to stay loyal and share positive experiences with others (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

Social media has become one of the main pillars of digital marketing. It allows MSMEs to share content that is informative, persuasive, and engaging (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are especially useful for enabling real-time communication and creating more personal and emotional connections with customers. However, there is also a downside—too much personalization can lead to privacy issues, which may reduce customer trust (Nguyen, Simkin, & Canhoto, 2020).

Email marketing remains a powerful tool within the digital marketing toolkit. Despite the rise of social media, emails still provide a high level of personalization and are highly effective when used strategically. Through data-driven approaches, MSMEs can send relevant messages that resonate with specific customer needs (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

At the same time, e-commerce platforms do more than just enable online purchases. They also help build customer trust through secure payment systems, real-time delivery tracking, and honest customer reviews (Pantano et al., 2020). When combined, these digital tools offer a more complete and seamless experience that strengthens customer loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Digital marketing has become an essential approach for creating this kind of engagement. According to Siregar and Widjaja (2021), and supported by international research (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014; Leeflang et al., 2014), the effectiveness of digital marketing in building loyalty depends greatly on how relevant, interactive, and consistent the strategy is.

Social media is particularly popular among MSMEs because it is affordable and easy to use. These platforms allow businesses to respond to feedback instantly, create communities, and share personalized stories—all of which contribute to building emotional connections and brand loyalty (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Hutter et al.,

2013). Tools like WhatsApp Business and Instagram are especially helpful for handling customer inquiries and complaints in a human and timely manner (Trainor et al., 2014).

Email marketing continues to hold its place in digital strategies due to its structured format and ability to be measured and personalized. It works well for sending newsletters, exclusive offers, and follow-up services, helping customers feel valued (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Ranaweera & Menon, 2013). Personalized emails, especially those based on customer data, can boost engagement and retention (Rowley, 2004).

E-commerce platforms bring value not only by making transactions easy but also by creating trust through clear pricing, user reviews, and reward systems like loyalty points (Chiu et al., 2012; Laudon & Traver, 2021). Features such as fast delivery, tracking updates, and responsive service also improve customer satisfaction and loyalty (Setiawan & Putri, 2022).

Bringing together social media, email marketing, and e-commerce into a single strategy creates a unified digital environment that supports every stage of the modem customer journey. It allows MSMEs to deliver consistent, relevant, and engaging experiences across all channels (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Kannan & Li, 2017). In this way, digital marketing becomes more than just a promotional activity—it becomes a tool for building long-lasting relationships and driving sustainable business growth.

#### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Approach and Type

This study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach to systematically and accurately illustrate the impact of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty in MSMEs. It is categorized as associative research, as it aims to examine the relationship between digital marketing variables

#### 3.2 Location and Time

The research was conducted in Pekanbaru, Riau, focusing on MSMEs in the food, fashion, and handicraft sectors. The research period spans from May to July 2025.

#### 3.3 Population and Sample

The population includes all MSMEs in Pekanbaru using digital marketing strategies. A purposive sampling method selected 100 MSMEs that: (1) use at least two digital platforms, (2) have at least 50 regular customers, and (3) are willing to participate.

#### 3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Primary data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale and covered respondent identity, social media use, email marketing practices, and e-commerce integration. Validity and reliability tests were conducted using content validation and Cronbach's Alpha.

#### 3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression with SPSS version 26. Classical assumption tests were performed, including normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation.

#### 3.6 Operational Definitions

- X1 Social Media: Measured by posting frequency, engagement, and content type.
- X2 Email Marketing: Measured by frequency, personalization, open and click rates.
- X3 E-Commerce: Measured by transaction count, service speed, and loyalty features.
- Y Customer Loyalty: Measured by repeat purchases, recommendations, and satisfaction.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.

		10.010 11			
No	Variabel	Indicator	Frequency(%) / Grade	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Gender	Male	45 (45%)	-	-
		Female	55 (55%)		
2	Age	20–30 years	30 (30%)	-	-
		31–40 years	40 (40%)		
		> 40 years	30 (30%)		
3	Use of social media	Intensity & Reach of Promotion	-	4.12	0.63
4	Use of Email Marketing	Frequency, Personalization, Engagement	-	3.85	0.74
5	Utilization of E- Commerce	Convenience, Security, Loyalty Programs	-	4.02	0.58
6	Customer Loyalty	Satisfaction, Retention, Recommendation	-	4.18	0.69

# 4.2 Multiple Linear Regression Test Results

### 4.2.1 Regression Model

The multiple linear regression model to test the influence of digital marketing strategies ( $X_1$  = social media,  $X_2$  = Email Marketing,  $X_3$  = E-Commerce) on customer loyalty (Y) is as follows:

$$Y = 1.015 + 0.321X_1 + 0.217X_2 + 0.294X_3$$

### 4.2.2 F-Test (Simultaneous)

Table 2.

10.010 =								
Model	F Count	Sig. (p-value)	Description					
Regression	35.427	0.000	Significant (H <sub>a</sub> accepted)					

# 4.2.3 t-Test (Partial)

Table 3.

Independent Variable	t Count	Sig. (p-value)	Description
X <sub>1</sub> : Media Sosial	4.876	0.000	Significant
X <sub>2</sub> : Email Marketing	2.654	0.009	Significant
X <sub>3</sub> : E-Commerce	3.812	0.000	Significant

# 4.2.4 Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

Table 4.

R	R²	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Description
0.741	0.549	11 636	54.9% of the variation in customer loyalty is explained by the model

In the era of digital economy marked by the rapid transformation of technology and shifting consumer behavior, digital marketing strategies have become a crucial aspect

for the sustainability and growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. Based on research and observations of several MSMEs that have implemented digital marketing strategies through social media, email marketing, and ecommerce, it has been found that these three digital channels play a vital role in building and maintaining long-term customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is not only related to repeat purchases but also includes emotional attachment, brand trust, and active customer participation in promoting MSME products through digital word-of-mouth.

The research results highlight that digital marketing strategies, when implemented in an integrated manner, contribute significantly to enhancing customer loyalty. The multiple regression analysis revealed that all three variables—social media, email marketing, and e-commerce—have statistically significant effects on customer loyalty. These findings align with previous international studies emphasizing the importance of synergy between digital touchpoints in customer experience design (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Kingsnorth, 2022). For example, MSMEs that use social media to showcase behind-the-scenes content and testimonials receive more engagement and emotional connection from customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Email marketing, when personalized and scheduled regularly, strengthens long-term communication and customer retention (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). Similarly, MSMEs leveraging e-commerce platforms with loyalty features such as vouchers and reward points see a higher rate of repeat purchases and customer satisfaction (Pantano et al., 2020; Setiawan & Putri, 2022).

Moreover, global trend reports like Digital 2024: Global Overview confirm the rapid increase in digital platform usage in Southeast Asia, reinforcing the urgency for MSMEs to digitize (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2024). However, MSMEs still face limitations in digital literacy and human resources (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Therefore, capacity building remains essential to maximize the benefits of digital marketing technologies.

First, the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok has proven effective in creating high levels of engagement with customers. MSMEs that consistently manage informative, educational, and entertaining content receive positive interactions in the form of likes, comments, and shares, which directly impact brand awareness and emotional closeness between customers and the brand. For example, content showcasing the production process, customer testimonials, and social campaigns has proven effective in building trust and strengthening the image of MSMEs as transparent entities that care about their customers. According to Sari and Pratiwi (2021), two-way interaction through social media creates a personal customer experience, which in turn fosters loyalty because customers feel heard and appreciated.

Second, email marketing strategies are also effective tools for retaining existing customers and nurturing long-term relationships. MSMEs that utilize structured email marketing—such as sending regular newsletters, special offers, and birthday greetings—successfully create a sense of exclusivity and personal attention. This strategy becomes more effective when emails are customized based on customer preferences and purchase history, making the messages feel relevant and non-generic. Email marketing also enables MSMEs to educate customers in-depth about products, after-sales services, and the latest innovations. A study by Wibowo and Kurniawan (2020) showed that personalized and informative email marketing can increase open rates and click-through rates, which ultimately have a positive impact on customer retention and loyalty.

Third, the use of e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Bukalapak provides strategic advantages for MSMEs in reaching wider audiences, offering a shopping experience that is easy, fast, and secure, and building brand credibility through ratings and reviews. MSMEs that optimally integrate digital marketing strategies with e-commerce platforms usually present attractive store designs, provide complete and accurate product information, and are responsive to customer inquiries or complaints. Additionally, features such as vouchers, cashback, and loyalty points serve as added incentives that encourage repeat purchases and foster customer dependence on the platform and brand. Research by Setiawan and Putri (2022) revealed that transaction

convenience in e-commerce, combined with responsive and professional service, is a key factor in creating customer loyalty in the digital era.

Other findings indicate that the combination of the three aforementioned digital marketing strategies generates a stronger synergistic impact compared to implementing a single strategy in isolation. While social media draws initial attention and creates emotional connection, email marketing serves as a medium for maintaining regular and personalized communication, and e-commerce offers a concrete conversion channel for transactions and customer reviews. Therefore, a holistic and integrated digital marketing strategy proves to be more effective in enhancing MSME customer loyalty amid increasingly fierce digital market competition.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies is heavily influenced by several internal and external factors, such as the digital capabilities of MSMEs, consistency in content management, responsiveness to customers, and willingness to continually learn and adapt to evolving technological trends and consumer preferences. Some MSMEs that struggle to maintain customer loyalty are found to lack a comprehensive understanding of digital market segmentation and do not yet have competent human resources for managing digital platforms. Hence, intensive training and mentoring by the government or private institutions are necessary to improve digital literacy among MSMEs, particularly in designing and executing effective digital marketing strategies (Rahman, M. M., Rodríguez et.al., (2020).

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that digital marketing strategies, when executed consistently, creatively, and based on customer data, can serve as key instruments in building long-term customer loyalty for MSMEs. Loyal customers not only contribute through repeat purchases but also act as brand advocates who voluntarily promote MSMEs to their social networks, both online and offline. Ultimately, this not only increases revenue but also strengthens the competitive position of MSMEs in a highly dynamic digital marketplace.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In the digital economy era, characterized by the rapid development of information technology, digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in building and maintaining customer loyalty, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The use of social media, email marketing, and e-commerce platforms has proven to be effective in facilitating two-way communication, increasing customer engagement, and fostering more personal and responsive long-term relationships.

Social media enables MSMEs to directly interact with customers, strengthen brand image, and quickly and efficiently disseminate product information. Meanwhile, email marketing maintains ongoing relationships through personalized content such as promotions, thank-you messages, and new product announcements. On the other hand, e-commerce utilization simplifies the transaction process while providing a convenient, safe, and transparent shopping experience.

Overall, a well-targeted and consistent combination of digital marketing strategies can enhance customer satisfaction and trust, which ultimately has a positive impact on MSME customer loyalty. Therefore, MSME actors need to continuously improve their digital literacy and adaptability to technological changes in order to ensure business competitiveness and sustainability amid the ongoing digital economic transformation.

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