



Perceptions of MSMEs Actors Regarding the Use of Social Media as a Marketing Tool in Pematang Baih Pasir Pengaraian

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the perceptions, supporting factors, challenges, and strategies of culinary MSMEs in Pematang Baih, Pasir Pengaraian, in utilizing Facebook as a marketing tool. The study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The population in this study amounted to 128 culinary MSMEs, with a sample selection technique using purposive sampling, resulting in 20 business actors as informants. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed that culinary MSMEs have a positive perception of Facebook use because it is considered capable of increasing sales, adding customers, and building brand awareness and relationships with consumers. Factors influencing Facebook utilization include technological understanding, experience using social media, access to digital training, and ease of use of the platform. However, MSMEs also face challenges such as limited human resources and time, minimal training, technical obstacles, and pressure to continuously produce engaging content. To overcome these challenges, MSMEs implement various strategies, such as participating in digital training, utilizing Facebook Groups and Marketplace features, creating creative content, utilizing customer feedback, and using the post scheduling feature. This study concludes that Facebook has great potential as a marketing tool for MSMEs if supported by increased capacity and adequate access to technology.

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Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of the Indonesian economy, contributing significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), there are approximately 3.6 million MSMEs across 34 provinces (BPS, 2020). In line with the mandate of Law No. 7 of 2021, MSMEs are directed to become independent, productive economic enterprises to boost household incomes. However, in their



development, MSMEs still face classic challenges such as limited capital, market access, and low utilization of digital technology.

The digital revolution and the post-pandemic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have drastically changed the business landscape. Restrictions on physical interaction have forced businesses to transform to digital platforms. Social media is now more than just a communication tool, but also a crucial marketing tool. According to Maria et al. (2024), the use of social media offers significant opportunities for MSMEs to promote, build brands, and achieve cost efficiency. One of the most dominant platforms is Facebook, with over 2.8 billion active global users, which offers specific features such as Facebook Marketplace and community groups to reach a wide range of consumers (Vernia, 2017).

In Rokan Hulu Regency, there are 27,074 MSMEs, with one of their main growth centers located in the Pematang Baih area of Pasir Pengaraian. This location is highly strategic due to its proximity to the Islamic Center Mosque, a regional icon and a busy hub. MSME growth in Pematang Baih has shown a positive trend in recent years, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Development of the Number of MSMEs in Pematang Baih

No	Business Scale	2019	2020	2021
1.	Micro Enterprises	82	84	92
2.	Small business	7	8	7
3.	Medium-sized enterprises	6	7	5
Total		31	95	99

Source: Department of Industry and Trade of Rokan Hulu Regency, 2022

The rapid increase in the number of micro-enterprises is often driven by the ease of starting a business without significant capital, but on the other hand, these entrepreneurs often have limited formal education and technical skills. The culinary sector dominates the region, with 31 food businesses and 26 beverage businesses out of a total of 104 MSMEs in 2021. The latest data from the Cooperatives and SMEs Office for 2025 shows even greater expansion, with a total of 145 MSMEs in the Pematang Baih area and its surroundings, of which 128 are in the culinary sector.

Table 2. Distribution of Culinary MSMEs and Average Age of Actors (2025)

Location	Number of Culinary MSMEs	Average Age
Islamic Center	21	35
Local Government Complex	17	36
Other	33	41
Baih Embankment	57	35
Total	128	37

Source: Cooperatives and SMEs Service, 2025

Despite being run by entrepreneurs of productive age (average age 37), the use of digital technology in Pematang Baih is still far from optimal. Initial observations indicate that only around 30% of MSMEs are trying to market their products through digital applications or social media (Fitriah et al., 2022). Most still rely on conventional methods such as banners and brochures. This gap creates problems such as unstable sales fluctuations and a complete dependence on physical tourist visits.

This unpreparedness is not only caused by technical constraints (lack of understanding of features), but also by perceptual and cultural factors. Some business owners remain skeptical about the effectiveness of digital marketing compared to traditional methods (Solida et al., 2022), and there are

concerns about the security of online transactions (Maab et al., 2023). Given the potential for up to 30% sales increases through active Facebook use (Utami et al., 2022), a thorough understanding of MSMEs' perceptions is crucial.

Based on this background, this study aims to identify the perceptions of culinary MSMEs in Pematang Baih regarding the use of Facebook as a marketing tool, analyze the factors that influence the adoption of this technology, and formulate appropriate strategies to encourage the digital transformation of MSMEs in the Pasir Pengaraian area.

Literature review

The definition of MSMEs according to Law No. 20 of 2008 concerning Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) states the definition of MSMEs as follows:

1. Micro Enterprises are productive businesses owned by individuals and/or individual business entities that meet the criteria for Micro Enterprises as regulated in this Law.
2. Small Business is a stand-alone productive economic enterprise, carried out by an individual or business entity that is not a subsidiary or branch of a company owned, controlled, or part of either directly or indirectly a Medium Business or Large Business that meets the criteria for a Small Business as referred to in this Law.
3. Medium Enterprises are independent productive economic enterprises, carried out by individuals or business entities that are not subsidiaries or branches of companies owned, controlled, or are part of either directly or indirectly with Small Enterprises or Large Enterprises with the amount of net assets or annual sales results as regulated in this Law.

According to Antony Mayfield (2020), who provided his idea in the form of a definition of social media, where according to him the meaning of social media is media that users easily participate, share and create roles, especially blogs, social networks, wikis/online encyclopedias, virtual forums, including virtual worlds (with avatars/3D characters). In the current technological era, especially with the development of the internet, all limitations of distance, time and cost can be easily overcome. One type of technology that can be used to improve business capabilities, product sales, and purchases is the use of the Facebook media platform. Facebook is a social network where users can add their profiles, contacts, and historical information. In addition, this media can also be used as a communication tool by using various functional features.

Perception is a psychological process involving the recognition, processing, and interpretation of information received through the senses. In this context, perception is not simply the reception of stimuli from the environment, but also involves how an individual understands and gives meaning to those stimuli.

Research methods

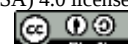
This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach located in the Pematang Baih MSME center, Pasir Pengaraian, with the main focus on culinary business actors as research subjects selected through purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through field observations, documentation, and in-depth interviews referring to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) indicators to explore perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of Facebook as a marketing tool. Data analysis was carried out systematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions using the Miles and Huberman model, while the validity of the findings was guaranteed through source triangulation techniques and techniques to validate information obtained from MSME actors around the Islamic Center Mosque area.

Results and Discussion

Culinary MSMEs' Perceptions of Facebook Use

MSMEs' perceptions of social media use, particularly Facebook, reflect their direct experience in adopting digital technology. Theoretically, perception is understood as an individual's process of interpreting environmental stimuli (Robbins & Judge, 2021). Interviews with six culinary MSMEs in Pematang Baih revealed that Facebook is positively perceived as a tool capable of increasing sales volume and reaching new customers in real time (Kotler & Keller, 2020).

The seriousness of MSMEs in building a digital identity is evident in the accounts of respondents Sri Wahyuni and Novi Marisa Nurtasari. They utilize the 'Digital Creator' feature and



professional profile photos to build business credibility (Figure 1). This demonstrates that Facebook is no longer perceived as a personal platform, but rather as a visual representation of the identity of culinary businesses in Pematang Baih. However, this positive perception is accompanied by psychological pressure to consistently produce content and face the risk of open criticism from netizens (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020).

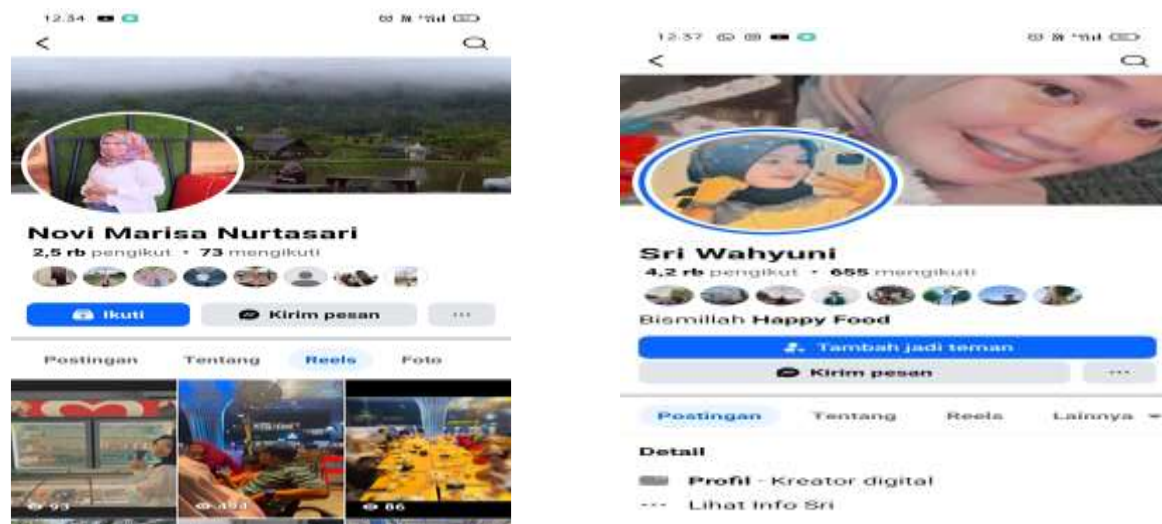


Figure 1. Respondent's Facebook Account Profile Display as a Representation

Factors Influencing Facebook Utilization

Acceptance of this technology is influenced by two main factors in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), namely perceptions of ease of use and usefulness (Davis, 1989).

1. Technology Understanding & Experience: MSMEs who have experience using Instagram feel more confident (self-efficacy) in managing Facebook features due to the similarity of functions.
2. Training Access: In accordance with Human Capital theory (Becker, 1964), business actors who have attended online marketing workshops are able to use paid advertising features more strategically and measurably.
3. Characteristics of Innovation: Based on the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), the adoption of Facebook in Pematang Baih took place gradually, where the early adopters group optimized business features more quickly than other actors.

Challenges in Digital Marketing

Despite the benefits, MSMEs in Pematang Baih face structural and individual challenges:

1. Resource Constraints (RBV Theory): MSME actors generally work independently, so they have difficulty dividing their time between culinary production and content management (Barney, 1991).
2. Role Conflict: There is pressure to respond to customers on social media while serving customers directly on-site (Kahn et al., 1964).
3. Technical & Infrastructure Constraints: An unstable internet connection hinders the uploading of high-quality content, which according to Parasuraman (2020) is an indicator of low technology readiness.

Facebook Utilization Strategy for Marketing

MSME actors implement adaptive strategies to overcome existing obstacles:

1. Community Optimization: Utilizing local Facebook Groups and Marketplace to reach consumers in the nearest area (Pematang Baih).
2. Creative Content & Reels: The use of short videos to show appetizing product visuals, such as on the "Kuliner Rohul" account which documents the Loumak Coffee menu (Figure 2).

3. Marketing Efficiency: Use the post scheduling feature to maintain promotional consistency amidst the busyness of daily operations.



Figure 2. Utilizing the Facebook Reels Feature for Creative Visual Product Promotion

The results of this study reinforce the findings of Sidokumpul (2020) and Hidayati et al. (2020), who stated that Facebook is the most effective platform for MSMEs to stay connected with customers. Furthermore, the findings regarding infrastructure challenges align with Siregar (2020), who emphasized the importance of business literacy and digital infrastructure support from the local government to optimize local economic potential in Rokan Hulu.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, culinary MSMEs in Pematang Baih generally perceive Facebook as a useful marketing tool, particularly for product visibility and customer interaction. Facebook utilization is influenced by perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, prior digital experience, and training access, while the main challenges include limited human resources and time, technical constraints, and digital literacy. MSMEs address these challenges through Facebook Groups, Marketplace, Reels, creative content, and post scheduling. This study is limited to culinary MSMEs in the Pematang Baih area and focuses specifically on Facebook. Future research is recommended to compare Facebook with other platforms such as TikTok or Instagram and expand the research area to examine differences in MSME digital behavior across locations.

Suggestion

Based on the research findings, several suggestions that can be put forward are as follows:

1. For MSMEs: It's recommended that they start setting aside scheduled time (using the scheduling feature) to manage their business accounts to maintain consistent promotions without disrupting production activities. Furthermore, businesses need to be more open to exploring simple analytics features on Facebook to understand consumer behavior more specifically.
2. For the Regional Government (Rokan Hulu Cooperatives and SMEs Office): Continuous digital marketing training is needed, not just basic outreach. Training should focus on culinary product photography techniques, content management, and paid advertising strategies (Facebook Ads) that precisely target local areas.
3. For Further Researchers: Considering that this research is limited to the Facebook platform and the Pematang Baih area, further researchers are advised to conduct comparative research with other platforms such as TikTok or Instagram, as well as expand the scope of the research area to see the differences in digital behavior of MSMEs in different locations.

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