Redefining Indonesia's MSMEs Landscape: Unleashing Digital Virality for Sustainable Growth

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies, particularly viral content, in enhancing the visibility and sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. By redefining the traditional MSME landscape, this research highlights the shift from conventional marketing approaches to digital virality strategies, reshaping how MSMEs engage with consumers and build sustainable brand identities. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through a literature review and interviews with MSME stakeholders to analyze the digital marketing strategies used and their impacts. The findings reveal that viral content significantly boosts MSMEs' visibility by capturing consumer attention, fostering online engagement, and strengthening brand image. This study offers valuable insights for MSME owners and local governments and supports institutions in implementing effective digital strategies. Practical recommendations include developing skills in content creation, collaborating with local influencers, and utilizing social media platforms to maximize outreach. These findings underscore the potential of digital virality as a sustainable marketing tool while also recognizing limitations such as resource constraints. Future research may further explore adaptive strategies suited to different MSME sectors.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Viral Content, MSMEs, Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and rapidly developing information technology, the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector plays a crucial role in the local and national economy (Leo et al., 2024). As an integral part of the city's diverse economy, MSMEs in Indonesia face significant challenges and opportunities. Limited resources and market access are often the main obstacles faced by MSMEs (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Sugiharto, 2024). Therefore, innovative and adaptive approaches are needed to overcome these constraints (Robertson, 2023). One solution that has emerged in response to these challenges is the implementation of digital marketing strategies (Watson, 2024). This study aims to redefine the MSME landscape by highlighting how digital virality, as a core strategy within digital marketing, transforms the way MSMEs engage, connect with consumers, and build sustainable brand identities, reshaping the competitive dynamics for small businesses. This strategy includes various techniques and methods that utilize digital platforms and information technology to increase visibility, reach target audiences, and expand market reach (Chidiogo Uzoamaka Akpuokwe et al., 2024). In this context, the role of viral content becomes very important as one of the main pillars in the digital marketing strategy (Robertson, 2023).

As technology evolves, modern consumers tend to be more digitally connected. They search, compare, and purchase products or services through online platforms. (Bodke et al., 2024). Therefore, MSMEs in Indonesia need to adjust their marketing strategies to respond to this consumer paradigm shift. Viral content has tremendous appeal in attracting online attention (Y. Wang, 2024). MSMEs can create buzz on digital platforms, increase brand awareness, and expand market share through engaging informative, and entertaining content. Indonesia has shown a positive digital infrastructure. The rapid adoption of information technology, the availability of adequate internet access, and the active participation of the community in digital platforms provide great opportunities for MSMEs to utilize digital marketing strategies. (Saepulloh & Alijoyo, 2024). With increasing competition and changing market dynamics, the sustainability of MSME businesses is critical. An effective digital marketing strategy can catalyze the growth and sustainability of MSMEs in Indonesia.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Indonesia has witnessed a dramatic transformation in its business ecosystem, particularly in the growth rate of MSMEs and sales through digital platforms. This transformation not only provides a positive boost to MSMEs but also significantly impacts the city's economic growth rate from 2020 to the end of 2021, according to the head of the Indonesia City Trade and Industry Office (DISDAGIN). Indonesia City's economic growth rate reached 3.5 percent, largely due to increased online product purchases. This increase was highlighted in a focus group discussion (FGD) event entitled "Survey of Consumer Needs for the Security and Convenience of E-commerce Systems" (Benoni et al., 2024). Despite the increasing adoption of digital marketing, limited research has focused on the specific impact of viral content on the sustainability and growth of MSMEs, particularly in the context of emerging economies like Indonesia (Azizah, 2023). Most existing studies have centered on large corporations or on general digital marketing strategies without delving into how viral content, as a unique marketing tool, can transform consumer engagement and brand visibility for

MSMEs (Thompson et al., 2020). This gap highlights the need for focused research on leveraging viral content to enhance MSME competitiveness and resilience in a rapidly digitizing market (Jafari, 2022).

A notable increase was observed in the MSME sector, with new business growth reaching 180,000 by 2022. Additionally, online trade transaction activity also experienced a significant surge, reaching an increase of 150 percent. Products that dominate in e-commerce transactions in Indonesia City demonstrate the diversity of consumer interest (Adi & Riwayat, 2024). The three product categories with the highest sales figures are fashion, food and beverages, and health products. This phenomenon reflects a shift in consumer behavior towards online purchasing, creating a significant opportunity for MSMEs to expand their coverage and increase their sales through the implementation of an effective digital marketing strategy, particularly through the use of viral content that can attract the attention of a large consumer base (Liu et al., 2024). This study introduces a novel approach by examining the specific use of viral content as a strategic tool to enhance MSME visibility and support business sustainability within Indonesia's digital landscape. While previous studies have largely focused on general digital marketing practices or the application of these strategies in large corporations, this research uniquely targets the influence of viral content in empowering MSMEs (Robertson, 2023). By investigating the elements that contribute to successful viral campaigns and their effects on MSME growth, this study provides fresh insights into how small-scale businesses can compete more effectively with larger enterprises. This focus on viral marketing as a means to level the playing field for MSMEs represents a new contribution to the existing body of digital marketing literature within the MSME sector (Robertson, 2023).

MSMEs that are able to adapt rapidly through the implementation of digital marketing strategies have a greater likelihood of survival and growth in the face of economic challenges precipitated by the pandemic (Kawane et al., 2024). A deep understanding of the changing business environment and consumer needs is essential for MSMEs in Indonesia to succeed (Hurdawaty & Tukiran, 2024). This study seeks to explore how digital marketing strategies, particularly viral content, can be leveraged to enhance MSME visibility and sustainability, ultimately providing a framework for effective digital marketing tailored to the Indonesian market's unique challenges and opportunities. The primary research question guiding this study is:

RQ: How can the strategic use of viral content redefine the MSME landscape in Indonesia to achieve enhanced visibility and sustainable growth?

To address this question, the research will analyze case studies of successful MSME campaigns that have utilized viral content effectively, identifying key factors that contributed to their success and the lessons that can be applied across the sector.

As defined by C. L. Wang (2021), digital marketing is a series of marketing strategies that utilize digital platforms and channels to interact with audiences, promote products or services, and build brand awareness. It encompasses a multitude of facets, including the utilization of social media for marketing purposes, the creation of digital content, the deployment of digital advertising,

and the application of search engine optimization (SEO) techniques. Digital marketing offers a distinctive capacity to personalize messages, monitor campaign performance in real time, and measure results in greater detail. This enables companies, including MSMEs, to more effectively communicate with their target markets in this digital age (Sundaram et al., 2020).

In the context of marketing, visibility refers to the extent to which a product, brand, or business is recognizable and visible to its target audience (Sedalo et al., 2022). In the digital environment, visibility encompasses a robust online presence, enhanced search engine optimization (SEO) rankings, and active engagement on various social media platforms. By maintaining a high level of visibility, MSMEs can attract the attention of potential customers, foster trust, and create opportunities for business growth (Denisova, 2023). Furthermore, increased visibility is frequently quantified through metrics such as the number of website visitors, the extent of social media engagement, and online search rankings (Malesev & Cherry, 2021). MSMEs are defined as businesses with a small or medium scale, in terms of revenue, number of employees, or assets. MSMEs play a pivotal role in local and national economies, contributing to job creation, innovation, and economic sustainability (Parida, 2021). In the context of digital marketing, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) frequently encounter difficulties in competing with large-scale businesses. Consequently, the implementation of an appropriate digital marketing strategy can be an efficacious instrument for MSMEs to enhance visibility and surmount market access impediments that are frequently a significant challenge for them (Panda, 2019).

Viral content as defined by Ambrose and Mathivanan (2019), includes widely shared online materials like articles, images, and videos, which capture attention and foster interaction due to their original and creative nature (Astari, 2021). In digital marketing, viral content is essential for building brand awareness and expanding reach, offering MSMEs a unique tool to boost visibility (Zeng & Kaye, 2022). This study contributes by focusing specifically on viral marketing within the MSME sector, filling gaps in previous research that often overlook the unique needs of smaller enterprises. Through case study analysis, the research provides actionable insights for MSME owners and practical guidance for policymakers in developing effective digital strategies that align with Indonesia's market dynamics.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method employed in this study is descriptive qualitative, with a literature study approach. The qualitative approach allows for the explanation of complex phenomena, such as the implementation of digital marketing strategies to increase the visibility and sustainability of MSMEs in Indonesia through viral content (Sugiyono, 2017). The research will be conducted through a literature study, which will involve the examination of various sources of information, including academic journals, articles, and related documents. A comprehensive examination of the literature will facilitate the identification of prevailing trends, exemplary practices, and the comparison of successful digital marketing strategies employed by MSMEs. This approach also allows researchers to comprehensively understand the factors that influence the success of such strategies, thereby providing a solid basis for formulating practical recommendations for MSMEs

in Indonesia. The descriptive qualitative method is the optimal choice for this research because it allows for a comprehensive and detailed examination of the challenges, opportunities, and impacts of implementing digital marketing strategies on MSMEs in Indonesia. A comprehensive literature study analysis will be conducted to describe various aspects of digital marketing strategies, including planning and implementation, as well as their impact on the visibility and sustainability of MSMEs. The findings of this study are anticipated to offer valuable insights for a range of stakeholders, including MSMEs themselves, local governments, and academics, with regard to the development and enhancement of the business ecosystem of MSMEs in Indonesia through the utilization of digital marketing potential, particularly in relation to viral content (Sugiyono, 2018).

The research methodology includes data collection techniques through a literature review, interviews with MSME owners and digital marketing practitioners, as well as digital content analysis from online platforms. The collected data is analyzed qualitatively to identify patterns and the impact of viral content on the visibility and sustainability of MSMEs. This analysis produces practical recommendations for MSME owners and policymakers to optimize digital marketing strategies, enhancing MSME competitiveness and sustainable growth in Indonesia. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.
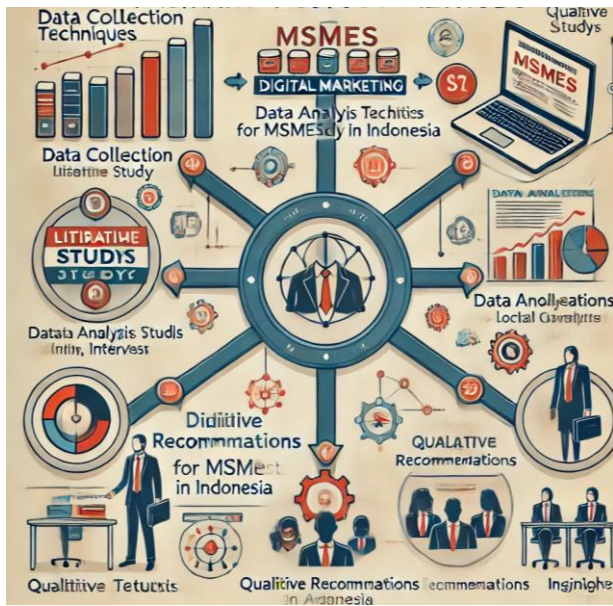
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for the Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on the Visibility and Sustainability of MSMEs in Indonesia

Data Collection Technique

As outlined by Makbul (2021), data collection techniques represent a series of methods employed to gather information or facts pertinent to a specific study. This technique encompasses specific

methodologies designed to procure the data necessary to answer research questions or achieve research objectives accurately and systematically. The following data collection techniques will be employed in the research on digital marketing strategies for MSMEs in Indonesia:

Literature Study Analysis

This technique involves in-depth research, reading, and understanding of various sources of information relevant to the research topic (Munsoor, 2021). In the context of this research, the literature study analysis will include academic journals related to digital marketing, viral content, and MSME sustainability, focusing solely on peer-reviewed scientific articles indexed in Scopus. The journals reviewed span from the year 2019 to 2024, covering key publications in business, digital marketing, and entrepreneurship to ensure the data is comprehensive and up-to-date (Long, 2022). The period was selected to reflect the most recent developments in digital transformation, particularly with the rise of social media platforms and viral content, which have significantly impacted MSMEs during this time. This timeframe allows the research to capture the latest innovations and trends in digital marketing and viral content strategies. Additionally, the research extensively utilizes references from articles in the form of Systematic Literature Reviews (SLR), which provide a structured and comprehensive overview of the existing literature, facilitating a deeper understanding of the research subject (Wohlin, 2012). This approach not only enhances the validity of the findings but also ensures that the insights drawn are relevant and actionable for MSMEs looking to navigate the evolving digital landscape effectively

Interview

Interviews are an interactive method whereby researchers communicate directly with informants to gain in-depth insights and qualitative information related to the research topic. In this study, interviews were conducted with key informants from MSMEs, digital marketing practitioners, and relevant stakeholders in Indonesia. These informants were selected through purposive sampling, based on their extensive experience with digital marketing and viral content strategies. The selection of informants aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives across various sectors, including fashion, food and beverage, and digital services, ensuring a broad understanding of the application of viral marketing strategies in different industries (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows a total of four informants were selected to represent different sectors and provide diverse perspectives. This number was considered sufficient for in-depth qualitative insights, as this study focuses on gathering rich, detailed data rather than large sample sizes. The informants were chosen for their direct involvement in viral content strategies and practical experience with digital marketing, ensuring that the data collected is relevant and actionable. The interviews were conducted in-depth, utilizing semi-structured questions to explore key themes such as creativity in content development, challenges with digital platform algorithms, and the role of digital literacy in enhancing marketing efforts. To ensure the reliability of the data, data triangulation was employed by cross-verifying information from different informants. The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, categorizing responses into key themes to conclude the effectiveness of viral content in increasing the visibility and sustainability of SMEs in Indonesia.

Table 1. Selected Informants and Their Relevant Experience in Digital Marketing and Viral Content Strategies

Code	Position	Details
Mr. A	Owner of a fashion SME	10 years of experience in digital marketing and a growing presence on social media platforms.
Ms. R	Operator of a food and beverage SME	Focuses on local culinary products with a viral content campaign that significantly increased brand visibility.
Mr. B	Digital marketing consultant	Has worked with several SMEs to develop effective viral content strategies, specializing in influencers and social media.
Ms. S	Owner of a tech-based SME providing digital services	Expertise in integrating SEO and social media marketing for business growth.

Source: Data collected from the interviews

Data Analysis Technique
Creswell (2014) defines data analysis techniques as a systematic approach to compiling, organizing, and presenting data in a way that enables the drawing of conclusions relevant to the research being conducted. In this research, data analysis techniques will be employed to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of digital marketing strategies to increase the visibility and sustainability of MSMEs in Indonesia through viral content. The analysis technique includes a quantitative and comparative analysis.

Qualitative Analysis
Qualitative analysis is a process of interpreting and deeply understanding qualitative data, such as interviews and digital content. This approach allows researchers to identify patterns, thematic findings, and meaning from the data.

Comparative Analysis
Comparative analysis is a process of comparing different factors or groups of data to identify significant differences or similarities. Results from the qualitative analysis were compared to identify correlations or differences between digital marketing strategies implemented by MSMEs and their impact on visibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The value of partnering with local creators who possess a deeper understanding of the regional context enables MSMEs to craft content that not only grabs attention but also builds lasting connections with the local consumer base. This reflects the findings of Cuevas-Molano (2021), who notes that viral content significantly enhances visibility by rapidly spreading across digital platforms. Mr. A also highlighted the importance of collaborating with local creators to produce relevant content, explaining that this approach not only enhances authenticity but also builds a stronger connection with the community, which is essential for sustaining growth. Conversely, Ms. R discussed the challenges she faces with platform algorithms. She stated,

> *"The primary challenge is adjusting to the constant changes in these algorithms. Every time I think I've figured it out, the rules change, and it feels like starting over. Digital literacy is essential for optimizing the potential of our marketing efforts. Without it, we are at a disadvantage. We need more training and resources to effectively use digital marketing strategies"*

Highlighting the importance of ongoing education and support for small businesses. This perspective aligns with the findings of Rosário and Cruz (2019), who indicated that MSMEs struggle to navigate the technicalities of digital marketing. Understanding how to leverage digital tools is vital for MSMEs aiming to thrive in a competitive landscape. Mr. B shared that digital marketing strategies played a pivotal role in maintaining business sustainability during the pandemic, asserting,

> *"Being online presents new opportunities for MSMEs to remain relevant. Without an online presence, we would have struggled to survive. The pandemic has shown us that we must adapt or risk being left behind"*

This indicates the shifting consumer reliance on online transactions, which has been observed in recent studies. However, challenges in measuring the effectiveness of campaigns were noted by Ms. S, who remarked,

> *"The challenge of measuring return on investment (ROI) is a significant obstacle. We often don't know if our efforts are paying off because we lack the tools to track our performance accurately"*

This points to a critical gap that needs addressing, as MSMEs require tools and training to effectively assess their marketing efforts. She emphasized,

> *"Understanding our metrics is crucial for making informed decisions about our digital strategies."*

The findings from these interviews reveal the complex landscape that Indonesian MSMEs navigate concerning digital marketing strategies. The insights gathered underscore the necessity for creativity, collaboration, and continuous learning to thrive in an increasingly digital marketplace. As Mr. A aptly summarized, *"To redefine our landscape, we must unleash the power of digital*

287

Redefining Indonesia's MSMEs Landscape: Unleashing Digital Virality for Sustainable Growth
Sutama Wisnu Dyatmika, Bagong Suyanto, Erna Setijaningrum, Widhayani Puri Setioningtyas

virality and harness it for sustainable growth." These results will serve as a basis for developing practical recommendations for MSMEs seeking to enhance their visibility and sustainability through strategic digital marketing.

The results of this study provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of digital marketing strategies to increase the visibility and sustainability of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia through viral content. By detailing the key findings, this research provides a strong foundation for developing practical recommendations that can enrich the MSME ecosystem in this digital era. One of the key findings of this research is that viral content plays a crucial role in increasing the visibility of MSMEs. Analysis of literature studies shows that viral content has the potential to spread quickly and widely on social media, create positive buzz, and increase brand awareness (Sakas et al., 2021). (Sakas et al., 2021). However, the interviews also revealed that creativity in creating content is an important factor, and collaboration with local creators can provide a deeper touch of authenticity.

The challenges and obstacles faced by MSMEs in implementing digital marketing strategies also emerged in this study. Most respondents acknowledged that there is limited technical understanding of digital platforms and algorithms that are constantly changing. Digital literacy is important, and this research highlights the need for technology adoption and digital upskilling among MSMEs so that they can make the most of the potential of digital marketing strategies. (Iriani et al., 2021). From a business sustainability perspective, research findings show that digital marketing strategies help MSMEs to remain competitive, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that is accelerating the shift of consumers to the digital realm (Panchal et al., 2021). The research also highlights that the presence of local e-commerce platforms is a positive factor in supporting the sustainability of MSMEs, making it easier for them to reach a wider market.

A comparative analysis of qualitative data from interviews and digital content suggests that the success of viral content depends not only on the number of interactions but also on its alignment with local values and audience characteristics. However, measuring the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns remains a challenge due to limited data literacy and analytics skills among MSMEs. This study recommends additional support, such as training, to help MSMEs understand and optimize their digital marketing strategies. This study significantly enhances the understanding of how viral content in digital marketing can increase the visibility and sustainability of Indonesia's MSMEs. Practical recommendations include improving digital literacy, collaborating with local creators, integrating e-commerce platforms, and developing campaign measurement resources. By implementing these measures, Indonesia's MSMEs can leverage digital marketing effectively and ensure business sustainability in a dynamic digital landscape.

Discussion
The Central Role of Viral Content in Digital Marketing for MSMEs
In today's rapidly evolving digital era, digital marketing has become a crucial strategy for the success of MSMEs. One of the most powerful tools within digital marketing is viral content, which has the potential to create a cascading effect, rapidly spreading across various digital platforms

and generating widespread engagement. When executed effectively, viral content significantly enhances brand awareness, enabling MSMEs to reach broader audiences and increase their visibility both locally and globally (Aydin et al., 2021).

Viral content refers to digital materials—such as videos, images, or text—that are rapidly shared due to their creativity, relevance, or timeliness. This content often transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, fostering engagement and generating positive sentiment among audiences (Sadchenko et al., 2020). For MSMEs, viral content offers a strategic advantage, allowing them to compete with larger businesses by amplifying their online presence at a relatively low cost (Kujur & Singh, 2020). However, the key to creating such content lies in creativity and ensuring local relevance, particularly by aligning the content with Indonesia's cultural identity and values.

Collaborating with local creators has emerged as an effective strategy for MSMEs to ensure that their content resonates with their target audience. Local creators bring authenticity and cultural understanding, making the content more relatable to Indonesian consumers. One of the respondents in this study emphasized, *"Working with local influencers has allowed us to connect better with our audience, as they understand the local culture and trends better than any external agency could"*. This aligns with research by Kujur & Singh (2020) which highlights the importance of local partnerships in generating impactful and viral content. For example, MSMEs in sectors such as fashion and culinary arts have successfully collaborated with local influencers to create viral campaigns that resonate with Indonesian values and aesthetics, driving both engagement and business growth.

In the Indonesian digital landscape, increasing brand awareness through viral content is critical for MSMEs to thrive. Successful viral campaigns can expose businesses to thousands, or even millions, of previously unaware consumers. However, the effectiveness of such campaigns depends not only on the quantity of interactions but also on how well the content aligns with local customs and values. Content that reflects Indonesia's unique cultural identity is more likely to resonate with the local audience and be widely shared, creating a ripple effect that significantly enhances brand visibility.

Despite its potential, implementing viral content strategies presents several challenges for MSMEs in Indonesia. Many respondents noted that they face significant technical difficulties in understanding the algorithms of social media platforms and tracking the effectiveness of their campaigns. One MSME owner shared, *"Each time we think we've figured out how to optimize our content, the algorithm changes, and we're back to square one"*. This reflects a broader issue of limited data literacy among MSMEs, which hampers their ability to fully leverage the potential of viral content. Without adequate digital skills, it becomes difficult for MSMEs to measure the return on investment (ROI) of their digital campaigns and to optimize future efforts.

To overcome these challenges MSMEs must focus on enhancing their digital literacy and creative capacities. Participating in digital literacy programs and creative workshops can equip MSMEs with the necessary skills to develop, optimize, and measure viral content campaigns. By addressing these skill gaps MSMEs can improve their ability to navigate the ever-changing digital landscape and ensure long-term business sustainability. As a respondent mentioned, *"We need continuous support and training to stay updated on digital trends and ensure our marketing efforts*

remain effective". With the right support systems, MSMEs can harness the power of viral content to remain competitive in Indonesia's dynamic digital marketplace.

Challenges and Barriers to Implementing Viral Content in Digital Marketing Strategies

Along with the rapid development of technology, implementing a digital marketing strategy has become crucial to business success. However, behind the great potential offered by viral content as a key part of digital marketing, there are significant challenges and obstacles that MSMEs must overcome to fully harness its benefits. One of the primary challenges is the limited technical understanding of how viral content operates within the algorithms of social media platforms (Dafonte-Gómez et al., 2020). As digital platforms evolve and their algorithms change many MSMEs struggle to understand how to optimize their content to achieve viral reach. As one MSME owner stated, *"We are constantly trying new things, but it's difficult to keep up with the changes in how platforms prioritize content"*. This highlights the need for continual upskilling and technical support to help MSMEs navigate the complexities of viral content.

In addition to the technical hurdles creativity and content consistency are significant barriers for MSMEs in their efforts to create viral content. Viral content not only requires originality and engagement but also the ability to maintain a cohesive brand message across multiple platforms(Gray et al., 2020). For MSMEs with limited resources consistently producing fresh, engaging content that has the potential to go viral is a daunting task. Moreover, the fast-paced changes in consumer preferences and digital behavior add an extra layer of complexity. To stay competitive MSMEs must be able to quickly adapt their content strategies, which can be difficult without access to creative professionals or a deep understanding of digital trends. Influencers or local creators can help address some of these challenges. Local creators bring an understanding of the cultural and social nuances that can significantly enhance the relevance of viral content for local audiences. Such collaborations allow MSMEs to create content that not only resonates with their target audience but also taps into authentic storytelling that is more likely to be shared and spread (Tomas, 2020). However, the cost of engaging influencers or creators and limited access to these networks remain barriers for many MSMEs, preventing them from fully utilizing this strategy.

Another major challenge lies in measuring the effectiveness of viral content. Unlike traditional forms of marketing where return on investment (ROI) can be more easily tracked through sales or conversions, measuring the success of viral content is often more ambiguous. Viral content is typically judged by the level of engagement, 'likes, shares, and comments, ' yet many MSMEs lack the digital literacy and access to advanced analytics tools to properly evaluate the impact of their campaigns (Ciasullo et al., 2020). As one respondent shared, *"We can see that our posts are being shared, but we don't know if it's actually helping our sales or just boosting our visibility"*. This highlights the importance of providing MSMEs with simplified, cost-effective tools that can help them track not only engagement but also the long-term effects of viral content on business growth. To overcome these barriers MSMEs must invest in technical understanding, digital literacy, and creativity. Collaborative partnerships with digital experts and training

programs focused on viral content creation can provide MSMEs with the skills needed to adapt to the changing digital landscape. By addressing these challenges head-on, MSMEs can unlock the full potential of viral content as a powerful tool for increasing visibility, boosting consumer engagement, and ensuring business sustainability in an increasingly competitive market.

Redefining the MSMEs Landscape through Digital Marketing
The interviews conducted with four MSME owners provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing digital marketing strategies. Before adopting digital marketing, many MSMEs relied on traditional methods such as word-of-mouth and local events to sustain their business, which limited their ability to expand beyond the local community. However, with the redefinition of marketing through digital platforms, viral content has opened new opportunities for reaching broader markets. Many MSMEs reported that viral campaigns led to significantly increased visibility, with one owner experiencing a notable rise in online orders after posting a viral video. This shift highlights how digital marketing has redefined market reach for MSMEs, moving from localized campaigns to national or even international exposure (Duffy et al., 2021).

In addition to expanding market reach, digital marketing has redefined how MSMEs engage with their customers. Instead of relying on delayed feedback from traditional methods, social media now allows MSMEs to receive immediate feedback from their audience. This real-time interaction helps them quickly adjust their offerings, fostering stronger relationships with their customers. Several owners expressed that the ability to directly engage with customers through comments and messages on social media has improved their responsiveness to consumer needs. This represents a significant shift in how MSMEs interact with their audience, transitioning from static interactions to dynamic, real-time communication (Lee & Yoon, 2020). However, despite these benefits, many MSMEs face challenges in adapting to the fast-changing digital landscape. Limited digital literacy remains a significant barrier, with some owners finding it difficult to keep up with the constant changes in social media algorithms. The need for continuous learning and adaptation is evident as MSMEs often struggle to maintain consistency in engagement. This indicates that while digital marketing has redefined the landscape, navigating this new environment requires ongoing education and adaptation.

Creativity and collaboration with local influencers have also become key elements in making viral content more effective. Previously, MSMEs had limited means to collaborate with external creators. However, digital marketing has enabled them to partner with influencers who understand local cultural nuances, which has become an essential strategy for making their marketing content more relatable and engaging. One MSME explained that working with local influencers allowed them to create content that resonated more with their audience, redefining how they produce and distribute content. Nevertheless, challenges such as limited access to creative resources and the cost of influencer collaborations continue to limit the effectiveness of viral content strategies for some MSMEs.

Measuring the success of viral content also poses a challenge for many MSMEs. While engagement metrics like shares and likes are visible, translating this into tangible business outcomes, such as sales, is more difficult. Several respondents noted that without proper tools for

tracking ROI, it becomes hard to evaluate the true impact of their digital marketing efforts. This reflects a significant shift from traditional marketing approaches, measuring success directly through sales, to a more complex model that includes digital engagement metrics. MSMEs now must navigate a new set of indicators to understand the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Based on the research questions in the introduction and discussion, redefining the MSMEs landscape is important to maintain the sustainability of MSMEs. Before the development of digital technology, MSMEs faced big challenges in reaching a wide market and competing with large companies. Marketing for MSMEs is generally limited to traditional methods such as word-of-mouth promotion, print advertising, or leaflet distribution, which tend to require a lot of time and money with no guarantee of effectiveness. In addition, promotional reach is usually limited to the local market, so many MSMEs have difficulty expanding their market and increasing the scale of their business (Rahmawati et al., 2023). However, with the development of digital technology, especially through digital marketing, MSMEs now have easier and more cost-effective access to reach a much wider audience. Digital marketing allows MSMEs to utilize online platforms such as social media, websites, and e-commerce to attract new consumers, build branding, and gain deeper market insights. MSMEs can redefine how they operate and compete through this digital approach, opening up previously difficult opportunities to reach without the fast development of digital technology.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the crucial role of digital marketing, especially viral content, in reshaping Indonesia's MSMEs by expanding market reach and increasing visibility. Viral content is not just an addition to marketing strategies but a key element that helps MSMEs overcome geographical barriers and foster sustainable growth. Despite these opportunities, MSMEs face significant challenges, such as limited digital literacy, resource constraints, and difficulties in navigating complex social media algorithms, which hinder the full implementation of viral content strategies. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how viral content enhances visibility and market competitiveness for MSMEs, particularly in emerging economies like Indonesia. By positioning viral content as a central strategy in digital marketing, this research adds depth to the study of how small businesses can leverage digital tools to compete with larger enterprises. Future research can explore the long-term effects of viral content on brand sustainability and consumer loyalty.

This study underscores the importance for MSME owners and managers to invest in digital literacy, creativity, and strategic partnerships with local influencers to maximize the potential of viral content and strengthen their competitiveness. Adapting to technological changes and continually refining digital strategies are essential for long-term growth. At the policy level, government intervention is crucial to support MSMEs by improving access to digital training and offering financial incentives, such as subsidies, to help MSMEs adopt digital tools. Encouraging

collaboration with digital creators will further foster an inclusive digital economy, ensuring small businesses are not left behind in the digital transformation.

A well-designed digital marketing strategy incorporating viral content is essential for MSMEs to thrive in both local and global markets. However, without the necessary skills and resources, many MSMEs will struggle to fully capitalize on the benefits of digital marketing. Addressing these gaps through enhanced education, collaboration, and policy support will enable MSMEs to unlock new growth opportunities, ensuring their continued role in driving economic resilience in Indonesia. While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its focus on the immediate impacts of viral content and digital marketing strategies. Future research should explore the long-term sustainability of MSMEs that have embraced digital marketing and how these businesses can continue to evolve in the ever-changing digital landscape.

The two primary limitations of this study are its reliance on secondary data sources and the limited generalizability of its findings across diverse MSME sectors. The use of literature review and digital content analysis may have restricted the scope by omitting emerging digital practices. Additionally, the qualitative approach, while insightful, may not fully apply to all MSME sectors due to variations in industry-specific challenges and digital readiness. Further research incorporating primary data is needed to enhance the broader applicability of these findings.

Abbreviations
MSMEs: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, DISDAGIN: Indonesia City Trade and Industry Office (*Dinas Perdagangan dan Perindustrian*), FGD: Focus Group Discussion, SEO: Search Engine Optimization, SLR: Systematic Literature Reviews, ROI: Return on Investment.

Authors' Contribution
Sutama Wisnu Dyatmika, as the primary author, led the research design, data collection, and manuscript drafting. Bagong Suyanto provided theoretical and methodological guidance, contributing to the research framework and literature review.

293

Redefining Indonesia's MSMEs Landscape: Unleashing Digital Virality for Sustainable Growth
Sutama Wisnu Dyatmika, Bagong Suyanto, Erna Setijaningrum, Widhayani Puri Setioningtyas

Erna Setijaningrum analyzed interview data and developed practical recommendations, focusing on MSME sustainability through digital strategies.

Widhayani Puri Setioningtyas conducted an international literature review, comparing digital marketing strategies across countries, and contributed to digital content analysis to ensure global relevance.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this research. There are no financial or non-financial competing interests that could have influenced the outcomes or interpretations of the study. Each author has contributed to this research with integrity, and the findings presented are solely based on the data and analyses conducted throughout the study.

Availability of Data and Materials

The data and materials utilized in this research are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author. The datasets include qualitative information gathered through literature reviews, interviews with stakeholders, and digital content analysis related to digital marketing strategies for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. Access to these materials will facilitate transparency, reproducibility, and further research in this area. Researchers and interested parties are encouraged to reach out to the corresponding author for access to the data and materials.

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295

Redefining Indonesia's MSMEs Landscape: Unleashing Digital Virality for Sustainable Growth
Sutama Wisnu Dyatmika, Bagong Suyanto, Erna Setijaningrum, Widhayani Puri Setioningtyas

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297

Redefining Indonesia's MSMEs Landscape: Unleashing Digital Virality for Sustainable Growth
Sutama Wisnu Dyatmika, Bagong Suyanto, Erna Setijaningrum, Widhayani Puri Setioningtyas

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