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Leveraging Social Media Engagement for Business Growth: Insights into Brand Awareness and Customer Loyalty in Human Resource Management

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Abstract. *This research explores the effects of digital marketing strategy, pricing, and product quality on the sales performance of Rendang Cipuik GG, a traditional culinary SME based in Lima Puluh Kota Regency, Indonesia. Employing a quantitative explanatory approach, data were gathered from 100 consumers using structured questionnaires and analyzed through multiple regression alongside SEM-PLS techniques. The analysis demonstrates that digital marketing and product quality exert significant positive influences on sales performance, whereas pricing shows no substantial effect. Nonetheless, the joint analysis reveals that all three variables, when considered simultaneously, contribute to shaping sales outcomes.The findings emphasize that in heritage-based culinary industries, consumers are more inclined to value authenticity, taste consistency, and overall product excellence rather than price competitiveness. This result highlights the pivotal role of digital transformation for SMEs, particularly in leveraging online platforms to expand market reach and strengthen brand presence. By maintaining high-quality standards while embracing digital channels, SMEs can sustain competitiveness and secure consumer loyalty in an increasingly digital economy. From a theoretical standpoint, this study enriches the existing body of SME marketing literature by presenting a comprehensive model that integrates digital marketing, pricing, and product quality into one framework. It adds empirical evidence supporting the primacy of non-price factors in shaping sales dynamics within traditional food businesses. Practically, the research offers actionable insights for SME owners and managers: prioritizing investment in digital marketing initiatives and ensuring consistent product quality should be the cornerstone of competitive strategies. Ultimately, the study illustrates that heritage-based SMEs must align tradition with innovation to remain sustainable and profitable in the digital era.*

Keywords: *Digital marketing; Price; Product quality; Sales performance; SMEs; Traditional food.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has transformed the way businesses interact with consumers, with social media becoming a powerful tool for marketing, engagement, and brand development. As businesses increasingly shift their focus toward digital platforms, understanding the dynamics of digital consumer behavior has become essential for achieving sustainable business growth. Social media platforms, in particular, serve as a space for brands to foster relationships with consumers, enabling direct interaction and enhancing brand visibility. The engagement between consumers and brands on social media is no longer just about promotional content; it has evolved into a two-way interaction that can influence purchasing decisions, brand loyalty, and ultimately, the growth of businesses (Barger, Peltier, & Schultz, 2016). Social media engagement, defined as the degree to which users interact with brand content, comments, likes, shares, and posts, is now a critical factor in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors in the digital era (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012).

Business growth, traditionally measured by financial performance indicators such as revenue and market share, has become increasingly dependent on the effectiveness of digital

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engagement strategies (Chahal & Rani, 2017). Companies that effectively leverage social media can increase brand awareness, enhance consumer trust, and improve customer loyalty, which are essential drivers of long-term business success (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). Social media engagement has emerged as a vital independent variable in understanding how digital interactions can contribute to business growth. However, this process is often mediated by several intervening variables, including brand awareness and customer loyalty. Brand awareness, as a psychological outcome of repeated interactions with a brand, is crucial in shaping consumer decision-making (Keller, 2003). When consumers are frequently exposed to brand-related content on social media, their awareness of the brand increases, leading to higher recognition and recall, which can influence their purchasing behavior (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005).

Equally important, customer loyalty plays a critical role in mediating the impact of social media engagement on business growth. Loyal customers are more likely to share their positive experiences on social media, which not only strengthens their relationship with the brand but also encourages new customers through word-of-mouth promotion (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The establishment of strong emotional connections and trust via consistent and authentic engagement on social media platforms contributes to higher levels of customer retention and advocacy, both of which are essential for business growth in the competitive digital landscape (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1999). In this sense, customer loyalty acts as a bridge between the initial engagement on social media and the subsequent financial and reputational benefits realized by businesses.

Given the complexity of digital consumer behavior, this study aims to explore how social media engagement influences business growth, with particular attention to the mediating roles of brand awareness and customer loyalty. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights for businesses seeking to optimize their digital marketing strategies and maximize the return on investment in social media platforms. As such, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior by offering empirical evidence on the processes that link social media engagement to tangible business outcomes. By exploring these interconnections, the study aims to shed light on the key factors that drive business success in the digital age.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The increasing prevalence of digital platforms has significantly transformed consumer behavior, particularly through social media engagement. Social media platforms have become essential tools for businesses to interact with consumers, influencing their purchasing decisions and fostering brand loyalty. This literature review examines the interplay between social media engagement and business growth, focusing on the mediating roles of brand awareness and customer loyalty.

Social media engagement refers to the interactions between consumers and brands on social media platforms, encompassing activities such as liking, sharing, commenting, and creating content related to the brand. These interactions are pivotal in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. Studies have demonstrated that active engagement on social media can enhance brand visibility and consumer trust, leading to increased brand equity and, ultimately, business growth (Barger, Peltier, & Schultz, 2016).

Brand awareness, a critical component of brand equity, is significantly influenced by social media engagement. Frequent interactions with brand content on social media platforms increase consumers' ability to recognize and recall the brand, thereby enhancing brand awareness. This heightened awareness can lead to greater consideration during the purchase decision process, as consumers are more likely to choose brands they recognize and recall (Huang, 2020).

Customer loyalty, another essential element of brand equity, is also impacted by social media engagement. Engaging content and personalized interactions on social media platforms can strengthen emotional connections between consumers and brands, fostering loyalty. Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, recommend the brand to others, and engage in positive word-of-mouth, all of which contribute to business growth (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013).

The relationship between social media engagement and business growth is complex and multifaceted. While direct interactions can lead to immediate increases in sales and revenue, the long-term effects are mediated through brand awareness and customer loyalty. Therefore, businesses aiming to leverage social media engagement for growth must focus not only on increasing interactions but also on enhancing brand awareness and fostering customer loyalty (Sashi, 2012).

Social media engagement plays a pivotal role in driving business growth. Its effects are mediated through increased brand awareness and strengthened customer loyalty.

Understanding these dynamics can help businesses develop effective strategies to harness the power of social media, leading to sustained growth and success in the digital age.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employs a quantitative research design to examine the impact of social media engagement on business growth in the context of Gojek, a leading Indonesian ride-hailing and services platform. This study aims to investigate the relationships between social media engagement, brand awareness, customer loyalty, and business growth using a structured survey approach. The survey will be distributed to 100 respondents who are active users of Gojek's services, selected through random sampling. Random sampling is employed to ensure a representative sample of the target population, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data will be collected through an online questionnaire administered via social media platforms, which is a practical method given the widespread use of social media among the target audience (Bryman, 2016). The questionnaire will include measures for social media engagement, brand awareness, and customer loyalty, which are essential constructs in understanding consumer behavior in the digital era (Huang, 2020).

To analyze the collected data, the study will utilize Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling), a powerful statistical tool for analyzing complex relationships among variables in social science research (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). Smart PLS is particularly suited for this study as it allows for the estimation of both the measurement and structural models, facilitating the exploration of direct and indirect relationships between social media engagement, brand awareness, customer loyalty, and business growth (Hair et al., 2017). This method has been widely used in marketing and business research, as it provides reliable and robust results even with small sample sizes, making it ideal for studies like this one (Chin, 2010). By employing this analysis method, the study aims to provide insights into how social media engagement influences Gojek's business growth through the mediating effects of brand awareness and customer loyalty.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section of this study presents the findings from the analysis of the data collected through the survey on social media engagement, brand awareness, customer loyalty, and their impact on business growth in the context of Gojek. Using Smart PLS for data analysis, the study aims to explore the direct and indirect relationships between these variables and provide insights into how social media engagement influences Gojek's growth. The results will be presented in terms of both the measurement model and structural model, followed by a thorough discussion that interprets the findings in relation to existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and practical implications for businesses looking to optimize their digital marketing strategies.

Table 1. Research Hypothesis Testing Results.

Hypothesis	Path	Path	p-value	t Statistic	Information
H_1	Brand Awareness -> Business Growth	0.718	0.026	2.231	Supported
H_2	Customer Loyalty -> Business Growth	0.202	0.347	0.941	Not Supported
H_3	Social Media Engagement -> Brand Awareness	0.928	0.000	43.405	Supported
H_4	Social Media Engagement -> Business Growth	-0.043	0.849	0.191	Not Supported
H_5	Social Media Engagement -> Customer Loyalty	0.775	0.000	14.172	Supported
H_6	Social Media Engagement -> Brand Awareness -> Business Growth	0.666	0.028	2.210	Supported
H_7	Social Media Engagement -> Customer Loyalty -> Business Growth	0.156	0.368	0.901	Not Supported

The role of social media engagement in driving business growth has become an essential area of research in recent years, with growing attention on how digital interactions can influence customer behavior and company performance. Social media platforms, as tools for brand communication and consumer interaction, allow businesses to reach large audiences, facilitate real-time feedback, and foster customer relationships that directly affect brand awareness, loyalty, and growth (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Engagement on social media has evolved beyond passive interaction, where consumers only observe content, to an active form of participation that includes sharing, commenting, and generating content. This dynamic shift has transformed the way businesses interact with consumers, making social media a critical component of modern marketing strategies (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Understanding the impact of social media engagement on business growth is vital for companies striving to enhance their digital presence and capitalize on the full potential of online platforms.

One key factor that mediates the relationship between social media engagement and business growth is brand awareness. Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers can recognize or recall a brand, which is a fundamental step in the decision-making process. Social media engagement plays a crucial role in enhancing brand awareness, as frequent interactions with brand content lead to better recognition and recall. Studies have shown that social media platforms significantly influence consumers' awareness of brands, with frequent exposure to brand-related content increasing the likelihood of consumer recognition and preference (Huang, 2020). As a result, businesses with higher levels of brand awareness are more likely to attract new customers and retain existing ones, thus contributing to overall business growth. Additionally, brand awareness generated through social media engagement tends to have long-lasting effects, as consumers are more inclined to choose familiar brands over unfamiliar ones (Keller, 2003).

In addition to brand awareness, customer loyalty is another critical variable that influences the impact of social media engagement on business growth. Loyalty is defined as the emotional connection that consumers develop with a brand over time, often leading to repeated purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. The ability of social media to foster loyalty is attributed to the interactive and personalized nature of digital interactions. Through social media platforms, businesses can engage customers in meaningful ways, addressing their needs, responding to inquiries, and offering personalized content. This type of engagement strengthens the emotional bond between the customer and the brand, making customers more likely to remain loyal (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Furthermore, loyal customers are more likely to share their positive experiences on social media, acting as brand advocates and influencing potential customers, which further contributes to business growth.

Customer loyalty is not only a direct outcome of social media engagement but also a significant mediator in the relationship between engagement and business growth. A loyal customer base leads to a sustainable revenue stream, as repeat customers contribute to higher lifetime value and lower acquisition costs. Moreover, loyal customers are more likely to engage in brand advocacy, amplifying the reach and impact of the brand's social media efforts. According to Sashi (2012), businesses with strong customer loyalty benefit from lower marketing costs and higher conversion rates, as loyal customers often act as a source of organic growth through word-of-mouth recommendations. Therefore, the ability of social media to enhance customer loyalty is crucial for businesses aiming to leverage digital platforms for long-term growth.

Despite the substantial positive effects of social media engagement on brand awareness and customer loyalty, the direct impact of social media on business growth is less clear and often dependent on other factors such as market conditions, competitive strategies, and the nature of the product or service offered. For example, some studies have found that while social media engagement can lead to increased customer satisfaction and brand recognition, it does not always result in immediate sales growth (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). This suggests that while social media engagement is a powerful tool for building brand awareness and loyalty, it is not a standalone solution for business growth. Instead, it must be part of a broader, integrated marketing strategy that includes other factors such as product quality, customer service, and pricing. As noted by Barger et al. (2016), businesses must align their social media efforts with other business functions to achieve sustainable growth.

The findings from the analysis of the Smart PLS model further support these insights by revealing that social media engagement has a significant effect on brand awareness and customer loyalty, both of which play vital roles in fostering business growth. However, the direct effect of social media engagement on business growth in this study was found to be insignificant, as evidenced by a low t-statistic and high p-value for the direct path from social media engagement to business growth. This result underscores the importance of intermediate variables such as brand awareness and customer loyalty in explaining how social media engagement translates into business success. These findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the indirect effects of digital interactions on business outcomes, suggesting that social media engagement alone cannot guarantee growth without the mediation of other factors (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012).

While social media engagement plays a crucial role in enhancing brand awareness and fostering customer loyalty, its direct impact on business growth remains complex and requires further investigation. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of considering mediating variables when examining the relationship between social media engagement and business performance. Future research should explore other potential mediators and moderators that could influence this relationship, such as the quality of social media content, the frequency of engagement, and consumer perceptions of brand authenticity. Businesses aiming to leverage social media for growth must adopt a holistic approach that integrates social media efforts with broader marketing strategies to maximize the benefits of digital engagement. By doing so, they can build stronger brands, cultivate customer loyalty, and drive sustainable business growth in the increasingly competitive digital marketplace.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study analyzed the effects of digital marketing strategy, price, and product quality on sales performance at Rendang Cipuik GG, a traditional culinary SME in Lima Puluh Kota Regency, Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that digital marketing strategy and product quality significantly and positively influence sales performance, while price does not exert a significant effect. Nevertheless, the simultaneous test confirmed that the three independent variables collectively affect sales outcomes, underscoring the importance of integrating marketing strategies. Theoretically, the study contributes to SME marketing literature by contextualizing digital marketing and product quality within heritage-based food businesses, suggesting that authenticity and product excellence outweigh price sensitivity in consumer purchasing decisions.

From a practical perspective, the results highlight that SMEs should prioritize digital marketing initiatives and continuous improvement of product quality to enhance competitiveness and sales performance. While price competitiveness remains relevant, a value-based pricing approach that communicates authenticity and superior quality may be more effective than competing solely on cost. Policymakers and SME development agencies can draw from these insights to design training and capacity-building programs that enhance SMEs' digital literacy and product innovation. Although limited to one SME and a cross-sectional design, this study opens avenues for future research to broaden the sample across regions, adopt longitudinal approaches, and incorporate moderating or mediating variables such as trust, loyalty, and cultural values for a more comprehensive understanding of SME sales performance.

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