

Digitalization of MSME marketing strategies in increasing sales of BlewUp brand bag products in e-commerce

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the digital marketing strategies used by BlewUp, a micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME), on e-commerce platforms to boost sales of its bag products. A qualitative, case study approach was employed, gathering data through interviews, observations, and documentation. The study's participants included BlewUp's owners and marketing staff. Findings indicate that BlewUp employs various digital marketing strategies, including content optimization, promotions, and digital consumer services. However, these strategies remain suboptimal in areas like SEO, content variety, promotion frequency, and consumer review management. Additionally, BlewUp faces challenges with limited human resources and capital constraints. To improve its strategy and achieve sustainable sales growth, it is recommended that BlewUp invest in developing human resource capabilities, expanding digital marketing knowledge, adopting the latest technologies, and enhancing consumer data analysis.
Keywords: Digital marketing strategy, MSMEs, e-commerce

Introduction

In the current era of globalization and evolving fashion trends, bags have become popular products sought after by various consumer groups. This demand has driven the growth of bag MSMEs across many regions, including Bandung, recognized as Indonesia's largest hub for the bag industry. The rise of local MSMEs producing bags has intensified competition among businesses, pushing them to effectively promote their products to stand out against competitors (Wahyuni Mustika et al., 2022). As a necessity in daily life for diverse consumer segments—ranging from students and

university attendees to working professionals—demand for bags from local MSMEs is expected to keep growing. The bag industry in Indonesia has been expanding at an average annual rate of 10% (source: idxchannel.com, August 2023). To thrive in this competitive market, bag MSMEs must enhance their digital marketing strategies and continuously innovate their products to capture a broader market share and boost sales.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a vital sector in the Indonesian economy, contributing 61%, or IDR 9,580 trillion, to the Gross Domestic Product (source: ekon.go.id, August 2023). Despite this substantial contribution, MSMEs face numerous challenges, particularly the growing competition in the digital era. One example of a local MSME leveraging digital marketing through e-commerce is BlewUp, a bag brand based in Bandung. Founded in 2018 by Rizki FA, BlewUp specializes in producing stylish bags for both men and women. Known for their simple, minimalist, and fashionable designs, BlewUp's product line includes Sling Bags, Backpacks, Waistbags, Totebags, Handbags, and multifunctional bags. Some models feature waterproof materials and dedicated compartments for laptops and other specific items. With prices ranging from IDR 15,000 to IDR 65,000 depending on the model and size, BlewUp offers affordable options to appeal to a broad consumer base.

To boost sales, BlewUp leverages a comprehensive digital marketing strategy across e-commerce platforms like Shopee, Lazada, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop. Key tactics include paid advertising, video content, live streaming, eye-catching product photos, promotions, and discounts to enhance brand visibility. Additionally, BlewUp uses Instagram as a key social media channel to advertise its products, engaging potential customers through visually appealing posts and targeted ads. Together, these efforts enable BlewUp to reach a wider audience, increase customer engagement, and drive higher sales on digital platforms.

Month	Sales (Pcs)	Percentage	Note
January	1804	-	-
February	1914	6,10%	Up
March	1430	-25,29%	Down
April	2768	93,57%	Up
May	4259	53,87%	UP
June	7973	87,20%	Down
July	14442	81,14%	Up
August	12924	-10,51%	Down
September	11058	-14,44%	Down
October	11724	6,02%	Up
November	12724	8,53%	Down

Source: BlewUp Sales Data 2023

Table above shows that BlewUp bag sales in January 2023 reached 1,804 units, establishing a baseline for the year. In February, sales rose by 6.10% to 1,914 units compared to January. However, March saw a sharp decline of 25.29%, bringing sales down to 1,430 units. This trend reversed in April, with a significant sales spike of 93.57% from March, reaching 2,768 units. Sales continued to grow through June, which saw an impressive 87.20% increase from May, hitting a peak of 7,973 units—the highest monthly sales of 2023. Following this peak, sales declined by 10.51% in August compared to July, dropping to 12,924 units. This downward trend persisted into September, with a further decrease of 14.44%, totaling 11,058 units. Starting in October, sales began to recover, with a 6.02% increase from September to 11,724 units. November saw an additional rise of 8.53%, reaching 12,724 units. However, in December, sales fell by 7.07% from November, ending the year at 11,824 units.

These fluctuations in BlewUp's sales are believed to stem from underutilized digital marketing strategies. This observation has motivated a study titled **Digitalization of MSME Marketing Strategy in Increasing Sales of BlewUp Brand Bag Products in E-Commerce**. The study aims to uncover the real causes behind BlewUp's sales declines and to identify effective solutions to boost sales through optimized digital marketing strategies.

Literature Review

Digitalization

According to Brennen and Kreiss (2015) as cited in Radiansyah (2022), digitalization refers to the growing integration of data and digital technologies across various sectors, driving transformation and creating new value for both industries and society. Furthermore, the adoption of digital technologies enhances operational efficiency by enabling automation, utilizing data analysis for informed decision-making, and leveraging digital platforms to improve communication and engagement with consumers (Lesnussa et al., 2023).

Marketing strategy

According to Robert M. Grant (2015), as cited in Tresna et al. (2023), strategy is a comprehensive plan that allocates resources to achieve a profitable position. In the context of marketing, Sofyan Assauri (2004), cited in Yacub and Mustajab (2020), describes marketing as a human activity focused on fulfilling needs and desires through exchanges or transactions. A marketing strategy, therefore, can be understood as a series of steps undertaken by companies to identify unmet customer needs, estimate market size and profit potential, select the target market segment, and design, develop, and market products tailored to meet those needs

(Musyawarah & Idayanti, 2022). This aligns with Tjiptono's (2016) perspective, cited in Saribu and Maranatha (2020), that a marketing strategy is a foundational plan created by a company to achieve its goals by developing sustainable competitive advantages within its target market.

Sales Level

One key indicator of a successful marketing strategy is an increase in sales, which reflects a growth in the number of goods or services sold to customers over a set period. Sales growth can occur through a rise in overall product sales or by expanding market share within specific segments (Basu Swastha & Irawan, 2004, as cited in Sudrartono, 2019). Sendianto (2021) further highlights that sales are a critical marketing function, essential for achieving the company's goal of profitability and ensuring its ongoing viability.

E-commerce

Deni Apriadi (2017), as cited in Susilowati et al. (2022), defines e-commerce as the process of buying and selling goods and services electronically through computerized transactions conducted over the internet and other digital technologies. By utilizing e-commerce, MSMEs can reach a broader market, thus creating greater opportunities for increasing product sales. This perspective aligns with Setiawati and Widyartati (2017), cited in Putri et al. (2022), who stress the importance of digital marketing for the sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises, noting that online marketing strategies positively impact MSME sales. According to Trulline (2021), the development of e-commerce systems for MSMEs also aims to shift reliance from conventional purchasing methods to online shopping, allowing MSMEs to promote, market, and sell products to internet users without the limitations of time and location, thereby enabling customers to shop whenever and wherever they choose.

Solihat and Sandika (2022) further argue that e-commerce offers significant advantages for MSMEs, such as a faster purchasing process, easier store and product listing creation, reduced costs, affordable advertising, greater customer flexibility, and the ability to reach a wider audience without geographic restrictions. E-commerce platforms also facilitate product and price comparisons, faster responses to buyer inquiries, and a variety of payment methods, making online marketing a valuable strategy for MSMEs to increase sales in today's digital landscape.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach. According to Sugiyono (2020), qualitative research is used to examine natural phenomena, with researchers acting

as the primary instruments in data collection. The study uses triangulation for data collection, combining multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The data analysis process is inductive, meaning that it involves interpreting the collected data to form conclusions. The goal of qualitative research is to emphasize meaning rather than generalization. This research follows a case study design, which, according to Harahap (2020), is an exploratory and descriptive method used to study a phenomenon in its natural context. The focus is on understanding the digital marketing strategy implemented by BlewUp MSME on e-commerce platforms to increase sales of its bag products. The research was conducted between January and February 2024 at BlewUp's office and production site in Bandung.

In line with Sugiyono's (2019) definition, the population in this study refers to the generalization area, including objects or subjects with specific characteristics relevant to the research. The population consists of BlewUp's owners and marketing staff. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which Sugiyono (2019) defines as selecting data sources based on specific criteria. As stated by Sanifah Faisa in Setiawan and Sisilia (2020), the selection criteria for informants are as follows:

1. Individuals who possess expertise or experience in the area under study, in this case, the BlewUp owner with extensive experience in managing the business, capable of providing in-depth information.
2. Those actively involved in the activities under investigation, specifically the three marketing staff members responsible for designing and implementing BlewUp's digital marketing strategies.
3. Individuals who are available and not occupied with other work commitments, ensuring their participation in the study.
4. Informants who provide accurate and objective information, ensuring reliability and validity in the data gathered.

The study involved four participants: one BlewUp owner and three marketing staff members. These individuals were selected based on their active roles in designing and implementing BlewUp's digital marketing strategies on e-commerce platforms. The research procedure includes several stages: preparation, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. Data collection methods involved in-depth interviews, observations of digital marketing activities, and documentation of sales data and marketing efforts. The in-depth interviews were guided by a set of questions focused on BlewUp's digital marketing strategies in the e-commerce space. The results of the data analysis were interpreted to address the research questions regarding BlewUp's strategies for increasing product sales through e-commerce platforms.

Results and Discussion

Based on interviews with the owner of BlewUp UMKM, it is clear that BlewUp is actively marketing its bag products on various e-commerce platforms, including Shopee, Lazada, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop. According to Aryasatya et al. (2023), e-commerce platforms have become an effective marketing strategy for MSMEs in the digital era. BlewUp's digital marketing efforts for its bag products involve using digital content, such as high-quality photos and videos, to promote products online. The owner mentioned that attractive product photos highlighting the design, features, and details of the bags are regularly uploaded to e-commerce platforms to catch the attention of potential buyers. In addition to product photos, BlewUp also creates video content, including product showcases, usage tutorials, and brand content to further engage customers.

BlewUp leverages promotional features on these e-commerce platforms, such as paid advertisements, to increase product visibility and offer special deals, including affiliate programs. The owner shared that the company allocates a budget of up to 10 million IDR per month for advertising, especially during major sales events like the 11.11 sale. Furthermore, promotions and discounts are utilized strategically, often timed to align with seasonal trends and special events, as noted by the marketing staff. BlewUp also engages in live streaming on e-commerce platforms, allowing potential buyers to view products in real-time and interact directly with the brand. According to the marketing team, live streaming provides an opportunity to create a personal connection with customers and build trust.

Product distribution is facilitated through the e-commerce platforms, with customers able to order through Shopee, Lazada, or Tokopedia. The owner explained that products are shipped through logistics services such as JNE, ensuring timely delivery across various regions. Additionally, BlewUp interacts with customers through the chat features on e-commerce platforms and social media, responding to queries and addressing complaints to provide excellent customer service. Customer feedback, particularly reviews, is also monitored to improve future service.

Despite these efforts, sales data reveal fluctuations from month to month, indicating that there are still areas for improvement in BlewUp's digital marketing strategy. Interviews with three marketing staff members revealed that, while the digital marketing strategy is generally well-executed, challenges persist due to limited human resources, capital constraints, and the intense competition in the e-commerce space. Observations also revealed that BlewUp's product content and promotions

are visually appealing but have not been fully optimized in areas such as SEO, content variety, and promotion frequency. Additionally, consumer review management has room for improvement in terms of responsiveness.

These findings align with research by Sirodjudin and Sudarmiatin (2023), which identified that MSMEs often face challenges in e-commerce marketing, particularly due to a lack of knowledge regarding digital marketing optimization and limited resources. Interviews with the owner and marketing staff further confirmed that internal obstacles, such as limited human resources and capital, hinder BlewUp's ability to compete effectively in the e-commerce market. As noted by Sentoso et al. (2023), limited resources are a significant barrier for MSMEs in implementing digital marketing strategies. Therefore, it is crucial for BlewUp to enhance its human resource capacity and digital marketing expertise. Additionally, adopting the latest digital marketing technologies and utilizing consumer data analysis for targeted decision-making will be essential to optimize its strategies and drive sustainable sales growth.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that BlewUp UMKM has implemented a digital marketing strategy through various e-commerce platforms, utilizing photo and video content, paid promotions, live streaming, and digital consumer services. However, the strategy has not been fully optimized in key areas such as SEO, content diversity, promotion frequency, and consumer review management. Additionally, internal challenges, including limited human resources and capital, hinder the full potential of BlewUp's digital marketing efforts. To address these gaps, it is essential for BlewUp to invest in enhancing human resource capacity, digital marketing expertise, the adoption of advanced technologies, and the use of consumer data analysis. These improvements will help optimize the digital marketing strategy and facilitate sustainable growth in product sales.

Several recommendations can be made to improve BlewUp's digital marketing performance. First, BlewUp should prioritize training to enhance its human resources' competencies, particularly in the field of digital marketing. Furthermore, regular market evaluations and consumer research are necessary to gather up-to-date insights, which will guide the development of more targeted digital marketing strategies. Collaborating with influencers or relevant communities could also help expand the reach of BlewUp's digital promotions. Additionally, increasing the volume of engaging content, such as compelling photos and videos, along with boosting promotion frequency through targeted advertisements, would enhance brand visibility. Innovating with the latest digital marketing trends and utilizing consumer

behavior analytics via website and social media data could provide valuable insights for refining marketing strategies.

By implementing these strategies and conducting regular market evaluations, BlewUp can enhance the effectiveness of its digital marketing on e-commerce platforms, leading to increased brand awareness, consumer interest, and, ultimately, higher sales of its bag products. For future research, a quantitative approach could be employed to analyze the relationship between digital marketing strategies and sales growth in MSMEs, providing more specific insights into how digital marketing impacts product sales.

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