



DIGITAL MARKETING TRANSFORMATION OF PEMPEK CULINARY CREATIVE ECONOMY THROUGH INSTAGRAM, TIKTOK, AND SHOPEE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine the transformation of the creative economy in the culinary subsector—specifically Palembang’s traditional pempek—through the application of digital marketing on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee. **Methodology:** Using a qualitative empirical approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation from 15 pempek businesses in Palembang City. **Results:** Findings show that 92% of businesses experienced increased revenue and 88% reported higher sales after implementing digital marketing strategies. **Findings:** Additionally, 85% of respondents acknowledged that social media platforms effectively introduced pempek to younger audiences, contributing to cultural preservation. **Novelty:** This study offers a new perspective by linking digital transformation and visual storytelling with the preservation of traditional culinary heritage. **Originality:** Unlike prior studies, this research uniquely integrates cultural branding within digital content strategies, demonstrating how digital marketing not only drives business growth but also sustains local identity. **Conclusion:** Digital marketing plays a strategic role in enhancing the visibility and profitability of traditional culinary MSMEs while supporting the intergenerational transmission of cultural values. **Type of Paper:** Qualitative Empirical Research Paper.

KEYWORDS

Creative Economy, Traditional Culinary, Digital Marketing, culinary MSMEs, social media, transformation

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global creative economy sector has shown significant contributions to national economic growth, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia. One of the most developed subsectors is traditional culinary, which not only has cultural value, but also great commercial potential in the context of the digital economy (UNCTAD, 2022). Among the various local culinary products, pempek - a Palembang specialty - has seen an increase in popularity and distribution nationwide.

Digital transformation presents significant opportunities for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to compete in the digital marketplace. According to the OECD (2021), digitalization enables MSMEs to enhance efficiency, expand their market reach, and build stronger customer relationships through data-driven strategies. In Indonesia, platforms such as Instagram,

TikTok, and Shopee have become central to the rise of social commerce, which integrates visual content, customer engagement, and digital transactions (Hajli, 2015).

Instagram provides a visual space for building culturally rooted brand identities, TikTok enables creative and viral storytelling of products, while Shopee supports sales conversion through integrated systems for payment, promotion, and distribution. Together, these three platforms form a dynamic and highly competitive digital marketing ecosystem, particularly for products that rely on authenticity and local uniqueness.

However, the shift from conventional to digital marketing requires a strong understanding of social media algorithms, digital consumer behavior, and the ability to create content aligned with platform trends (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Digital marketing can also be used to shape cultural brand perception through local narratives enhanced by visual technology (Holt, 2004). This research seeks to fill a gap in the literature by exploring how digital marketing influences both brand perception and business performance in heritage-based culinary enterprises. Specifically, it investigates: How does digital marketing via Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee influence consumer perception and sales of pempek as a traditional culinary brand?

METHOD

Metode Analisis

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in depth the practice of digital marketing by traditional culinary businesses, especially pempek in Palembang City. This approach was chosen to understand the subjective experiences, adaptive strategies, and narrative processes that shape the success of digital transformation in the context of local culture-based culinary MSMEs. Data collection techniques involved in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and digital documentation (screenshots of Instagram content, TikTok, and shop pages on Shopee). Interviews were semi-structured to allow businesses to openly share their experiences and strategies.

Participant criteria include: Pempek business owners who have been in business for at least two years. Actively using at least two of the three main digital platforms: Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee. Domiciled and running a business in Palembang City.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, taking into account the representation of businesses based on business scale (micro-small-medium), age of the business, and variety of digital content.

The sample size consisted of 15 businesses that met these criteria. This number is sufficient for qualitative studies because it has reached data saturation, i.e. no new information emerged in the last interview (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, which included data reduction, theme-based categorization, and interpretation of the meanings that emerged from digital marketing practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This research involved 15 pempek business owners from various backgrounds in Palembang City who actively use digital platforms in their marketing activities. Based on the results of interviews and observations, the majority of respondents stated that the utilization of digital media has significantly contributed to the development of their business, especially in terms of increasing sales, expanding markets, and preserving local cultural identity. Digital Platforms and Their Effectiveness

The three main platforms used by respondents are Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee. As many as 88% of respondents considered social media as an effective promotional tool because it allows

for attractive visual presentation of products and direct interaction with consumers, in line with the concept of customer engagement theory (Brodie et al., 2011), which states that active and meaningful interactions form an emotional connection between consumers and brands.

Perceived Benefits of Digitalization

Most businesses (92%) stated that digital marketing strategies significantly increased their revenue. In addition, 88% cited improved quality of life both economically and socially. This shows that digitalization is not just a marketing tool, but also a means of local economic empowerment. This finding is in line with a study by Chong et al. (2020) in Malaysia, which concluded that the use of e-commerce in traditional food MSMEs improved operational efficiency and market expansion.

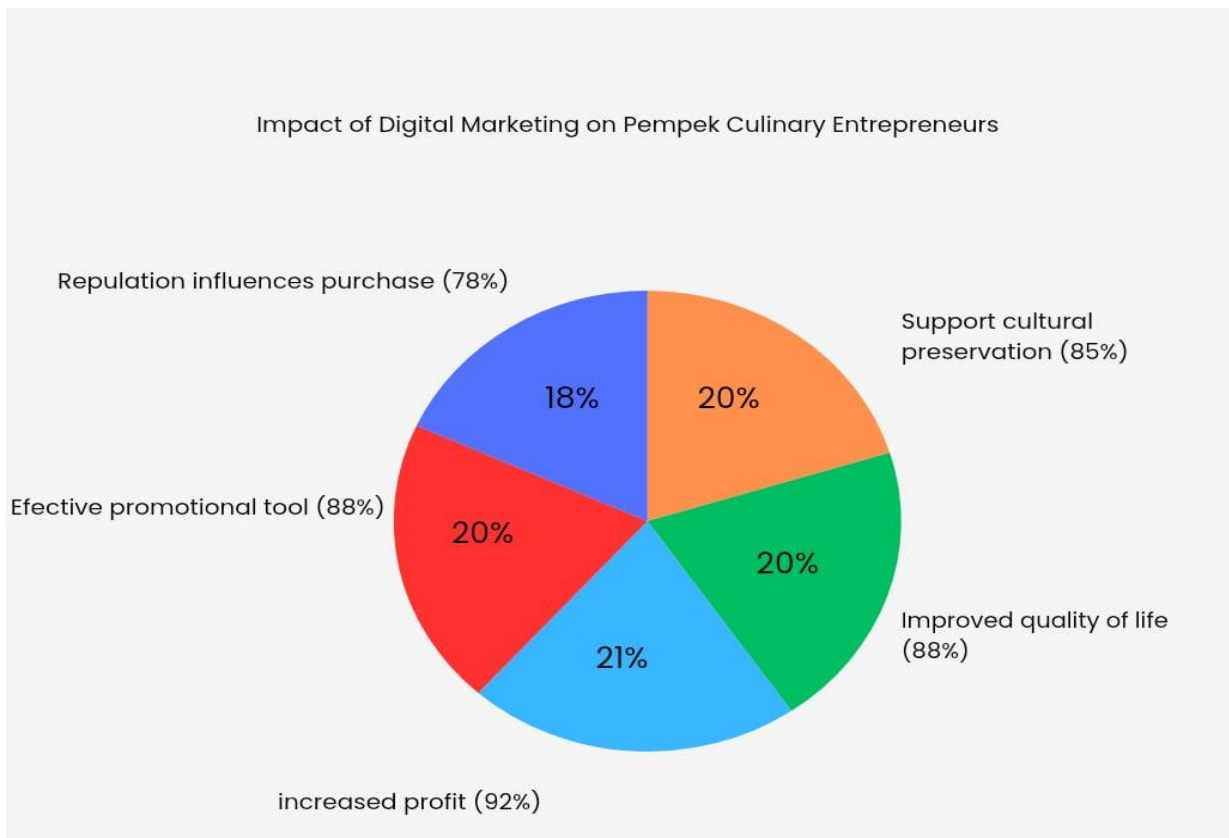
Table 1. Percentage of Digital Platform Effectiveness based on Respondents' Perceptions

Platform	used by (%)	effectiveness according to respondents (%)
Instagram	100%	90%
TikTok	87%	85%
Shopee	93%	88%

Source : Data Processed, 2025

The pie chart shows the proportion of benefits felt by pempek businesses after implementing the digital marketing strategy.

Figure 1. Impact of Digital Marketing on Pempek Culinary Entrepreneurs



Source : Data Processed, 2025

DISCUSSION

Perceived Benefits of Digitalization

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Cultural Preservation through Digital Media

As many as 85% of businesses believe that digital media has expanded the reach of pempek cuisine to a wider audience, including the younger generation. Educational and narrative content shared on TikTok and Instagram helps raise awareness of the importance of preserving local cultural heritage. This finding can be viewed through the lens of heritage marketing theory, which emphasizes the economic and symbolic value of brands based on cultural traditions (Urde et al., 2007).

Consumer Trust and Digital Reputation

Interestingly, 78% of respondents stated that social media reputation built through positive reviews and responsiveness has a greater influence on purchasing decisions than the number of followers. This reinforces the argument that in the context of MSMEs, perceived authenticity and customer experience are more important than pseudo popularity. This is consistent with the findings in the China study by Liu et al. (2022), which showed that interactive responses in traditional food promotions significantly increased consumer loyalty.

Visualization of Recommendations

A table like the one shown above makes it easier for readers to understand the distribution of platform usage. Pie charts are recommended to illustrate the proportion of perceived benefits, such as: 92% increased revenue,, 88% improved quality of life, 85% cultural preservation, 78% increase in consumer confidence.

Overall Interpretation

By integrating the theories of digital marketing, customer engagement, and cultural heritage marketing, the results of this study show that pempek MSME players not only make technical adaptations to digital technology, but also build strong culturally-based brand narratives. This strategy allows them to compete locally and culturally relevant in a competitive digital ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in this study, it can be concluded that digital marketing plays a strategic role in driving creative economy transformation in the traditional culinary sector, with a case study on Palembang pempek. The use of digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee is proven to not only increase product visibility, but also significantly impact revenue growth and market expansion for businesses.

Visual and interactive content-based marketing strategies are very effective in reaching consumers, especially the younger generation who are active in the digital space. In addition to the economic aspect, digitalization also supports the preservation of local cultural values by introducing traditional culinary to a wider audience through social media.

The synergy between social media and marketplaces forms an inclusive digital business ecosystem, allowing MSMEs to reach a wide range of consumers with high cost efficiency. However, the success

of digital marketing depends not only on account popularity, but also on product quality, brand consistency, and active engagement with consumers.

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