

SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF SAMBAL BOTOL MSMEs IN THE DIGITAL ERA: DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF TUKU SAMBAL

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the strategies implemented by Tuku Sambal MSMEs in an effort to survive and thrive in the digital era. The development of information technology and changes in consumer behavior encourage micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to adapt through marketing innovation and optimization of digital media. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of Tuku Sambal business owners and consumers. The results of the study show that Tuku Sambal implements several key strategies, including the use of social media as the main promotional media, packaging innovation and product variants to attract market interest, and strengthening relations with customers through delivery services and active interactions on digital media. In addition, business actors also utilize marketplaces and collaboration with local culinary communities to expand market reach. These findings provide an overview that digital adaptation and marketing creativity are important factors for the sustainability and growth of bottled chili sauce MSMEs amidst increasingly competitive business competition.

Keywords: MSMEs, survival strategy, digital marketing, bottled chili sauce, Tuku Sambal

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in the Indonesian economy, including in the culinary sector such as bottled chili sauce producers. Amidst the rapid development of technology and digitalization, MSMEs face major challenges to survive and thrive in the digital era full of disruption and increasingly tight competition (Agustin et al., 2023). Digital transformation is an urgent need so that MSMEs are not only able to survive, but can also take advantage of wider market opportunities through the use of information technology, digital marketing, and e-commerce (Rezka, 2024).

Digitization provides various opportunities for MSMEs, such as operational efficiency, market expansion, and increased competitiveness. A recent study shows that more than 50% of retail MSME sales growth came from digital channels or e-commerce in the last six months, indicating a permanent change in consumption patterns and sales strategies. Social media, especially Instagram and Pinterest, are now the main channels for marketing and sales, with 80% of retail MSMEs using Instagram to increase sales in 2023. This is supported by other findings that emphasize the importance of optimizing digital content, using SEO, and integrating various digital platforms to build brands and reach consumers more effectively (Zenia Rabbil et al., 2023).

However, the implementation of digitalization among MSMEs is not easy. Many business actors face obstacles such as limited digital literacy, technological skills, and limited human resources and digital infrastructure (Tamrin, 2023). Research on the "Nganre Sambal" bottled chili sauce MSME shows that increasing digital literacy and mastery of digital marketing can significantly boost sales and business growth, but the sustainability of the digital literacy agenda remains a major challenge.

In addition, MSMEs must also face external pressures such as inflation, rising production costs, and price competition, so they need to innovate in marketing strategies, price management, and building customer loyalty through digital programs. The use of technologies such as AI, digital inventory management, and customer loyalty programs has proven to be able to help MSMEs overcome these challenges and increase business efficiency (Zenia Rabbil et al., 2023).

MSMEs in the culinary sector, especially bottled chili sauce producers such as Tuku Sambal, are facing increasingly tight competition dynamics in the digital era. Digital transformation has brought significant changes in consumer behavior, marketing patterns, and MSME business models. Digitalization, which includes the use of social media, e-commerce platforms, and digital payments, has been proven to be able to increase market access and operational efficiency for culinary MSMEs. However, the adoption of this technology does not always run smoothly and evenly across all MSME actors (Rajagukguk & Udi, 2025); (Tannia Regina, 2022)

The phenomenon that occurs is that many culinary MSMEs are starting to adopt digital marketing strategies, such as using Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok for promotions, as well as collaborating with food delivery services (Muharam et al., 2025). A study on Geprek Bakar Tuku Sambal shows that digital marketing and promotions significantly influence customer purchasing decisions, contributing up to 71.9% to purchasing decisions. This emphasizes the importance of digital strategies in maintaining and developing MSME bottled chili sauce businesses.

On the other hand, the study also found that digitalization does not directly increase MSME resilience, but must be mediated by product innovation and adaptive human resource practices. This means that relying solely on digitalization without innovation and strengthening human resources is not enough to make MSMEs survive in the long term. In addition, MSMEs in regions or with limited resources still face obstacles such as digital literacy gaps, limited infrastructure, and lack of access to technology training (Muryati et al., 2023) (Syahfitri et al., 2024). This creates a gap between MSMEs that are able to optimally utilize digitalization and those that are still lagging behind.

The research gap that emerged was that there were not many studies that specifically discussed how MSMEs survive and thrive in the digital era, especially in the context of integration between digitalization, product innovation, and strengthening human resources. Most studies still focus on aspects of digital marketing or technology adoption in general, without reviewing in depth the adaptation and innovation strategies implemented by MSMEs in the digital era. In addition, research that raises case studies of local MSMEs such as Tuku Sambal is still very limited, even though the case study approach is very important for understanding the dynamics, challenges, and strategies that are contextual and applicable.

This research is important to fill this gap by descriptively examining the survival and development strategies implemented by Tuku Sambal in the digital era. The results of this research are expected to provide empirical and practical contributions to the development of local culinary MSMEs so that they can compete and be sustainable amidst digital disruption.

In this context, research on "Survival and Development Strategies of Bottled Chili Sauce MSMEs in the Digital Era: Descriptive Study of Tuku Sambal" is very relevant. This study aims to describe and analyze the strategies implemented by bottled chili sauce MSMEs, especially Tuku Sambal, in facing challenges and taking advantage of opportunities in the digital era. This study is expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of culinary MSME digitalization strategies in Indonesia, as well as being a reference for similar business actors in designing adaptive and innovative steps to survive and grow amidst the dynamics of the digital market.

"The success of MSME digitalization is determined by various factors such as IT skills, management skills, online transactions, the existence of quality technology, as well as cultural adaptation and continuous learning.

Thus, a deep understanding of strategies for surviving and thriving in the digital era is very important, not only to ensure business sustainability, but also to increase the contribution of MSMEs to the national economy amidst the ongoing digital transformation.

METHODS

The research conducted is a qualitative research with a phenomenological method that aims to explain a unique phenomenon of MSMEs for sambal. The subjects of the study were MSMEs for sambal and owners of MSMEs for sambal. The entire process of business activities as the object of this research. The research was conducted actually and virtually where the author focused on observing the strategies of Survival and Development, Digital Marketing, Entrepreneurship, and Business Adaptation in the Digital Era Descriptive Study of MSMEs for sambal. The author uses data triangulation, namely source triangulation to test the validity of the data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain valid sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Survival and Development Strategy of Sambal Botol MSMEs in the Digital Era: Descriptive Study of Tuku Sambal



Figure 1
Tuku sambal

This study aims to describe the survival and development strategies implemented by Tuku Sambal MSMEs in the digital era. Based on the results of observations of Tuku Sambal's Instagram social media account and interviews with business owners, it was found that this MSME actor has implemented several key strategies that are in line with relevant theories in the fields of entrepreneurship and digital marketing. This discussion will be described based on indicators from the theories used in the study, namely the theory of survival and growth strategies (David, 2011), digital marketing theory (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019), entrepreneurship theory (Zimmerer et al., 2008), and the theory of diffusion of innovation (Rogers Everet, 2003).

Product Differentiation and Market Penetration Strategy



Figure 2
Squid bottle sambal

According to David, (2011), one of the important strategies for MSMEs in maintaining their existence and expanding their market is to implement a product differentiation and market penetration strategy. Tuku Sambal practices this by providing three flavors of bottled chili sauce namely onion chili sauce, raw chili sauce, and squid chili sauce. The diversity of these flavors is not only intended to meet the diverse tastes of consumers, but also to be an added value that distinguishes Tuku Sambal from similar businesses in the same area. This flavor innovation is carried out by paying attention to developing local culinary trends, as well as input from customers conveyed via social media.

In addition to product differentiation, Tuku Sambal also implements a market penetration strategy by utilizing social media, especially Instagram, as the main platform for marketing products. Marketing activities are carried out intensively through various types of digital content, such as product photos, customer testimonials, production process videos, and seasonal discount promos. The business owner admits that through social media, Tuku Sambal products are more easily recognized by the wider community, without having to rely on conventional media or offline promotions. This is in line with the principle of market penetration strategy according to David (2011), namely expanding market share by utilizing effective communication channels that are in accordance with the target market.

Digital Marketing Through Social Media

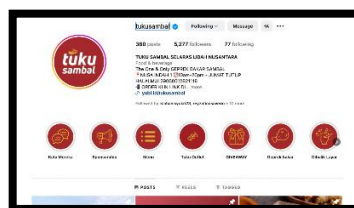


Figure 3
Tuku sambal social media

The digital marketing theory according to Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, (2019) emphasizes the importance of utilizing social media as the main promotional media in the digital era. Based on observation results, Tuku

Sambal is very active in using Instagram as a digital marketing medium. The Instagram account @tukasambal regularly shares various content, ranging from product photos, behind-the-scenes videos of the chili sauce production process, to customer testimonials. In addition, business owners also use the Instagram Story feature to create interactive content, such as polls for favorite flavor variants, quizzes with prizes, and flash sale promotions.

The implementation of this strategy is in accordance with the concept of content marketing, where business actors do not only focus on sales promotions, but also build relationships and customer engagement through interesting content. Thus, customers do not only become buyers, but also part of the Tuku Sambal digital community. This activity also strengthens brand awareness and increases customer loyalty, as explained in digital marketing theory.

Adoption of Digital Technology Innovation

According to Rogers Everett, (2003), innovation adoption is a process in which individuals or groups accept and apply innovation, either in the form of new technology or methods, in their daily activities. In the context of Tuku Sambal, this innovation is in the form of utilizing social media and endorsements as the main marketing strategy. Business actors quickly adapt to the development of digital technology and consumer behavior which is now more active on social media platforms.

The process of adopting this innovation is shown by the consistent use of Instagram for various promotional activities, both in the form of visual content and direct interaction with customers. In addition, endorsements carried out with local influencers are also part of an innovative strategy in disseminating product information, accelerating brand recognition, and expanding market share. Based on the theory of diffusion of innovation, this activity shows that Tuku Sambal is included in the early majority adopter category, namely business actors who quickly adapt and utilize technological innovation for the sustainability and development of their business.

Conclusion of Discussion

From the results of the discussion based on the theoretical indicators used, it can be concluded that Tuku Sambal's survival and development strategy in the digital era involves a combination of product differentiation, active digital marketing, innovative entrepreneurial character, and the ability to adapt to new technologies. All of these strategies are in line with the theories of (David, 2011), Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, (2019), Zimmerer et al. (2008)(Zimmerer et al., 2008), and Rogers Everett, (2003), each of which explains the importance of product innovation, marketing digitalization, adaptive entrepreneurial character, and adoption of technological innovation in the sustainability of small businesses.

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