.

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF WHATSAPP BUSINESS APPLICATION USAGE ON MSME MARKETING: A CASE STUDY OF UKK CAKE IN PELAIHARI CITY

Sumeta[1], Feby Arma Putra[2]

[1] Manajemen Study Program, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia
[2] Manajemen Study Program, Open University, and Lecturer in Politeknik PGRI Banten, Indonesia

Corresponding author: feby@politeknikpgribanten.ac.id

Abstract

WhatsApp Business is one of the applications widely used by SMEs due to its ability to offer various features that can support efficiency in managing communication, promotion, and product sales. With easy integration with messaging applications that are already popular among the public, WhatsApp Business provides practical solutions for entrepreneurs in managing interactions with customers more effectively. This research aims to analyze the impact of using WhatsApp Business on the marketing activities of SMEs, with a case study on the SME 'UKK Cake' located in Pelaihari City. This research focuses on how the features of WhatsApp Business are utilized to enhance the marketing process, improve communication efficiency, and expedite transactions. Additionally, this research aims to explore the experiences and perceptions of SME actors in utilizing this application for more efficient marketing and communication purposes. The method used in this research is a phenomenological approach with a qualitative research design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with the owners and managers of UKK Cake, as well as through participatory observations. Data analysis was conducted using data reduction techniques and thematic coding to identify important patterns that emerged from interviews and observations. The results of this study indicate that WhatsApp Business is capable of enhancing customer satisfaction, accelerating transaction processes, and contributing to increased sales of UKK Cake products. This research provides important contributions in demonstrating how digital technology, particularly WhatsApp Business, can be effectively utilized by MSMEs in managing marketing and communication with customers. Additionally, the results of this research are also expected to serve as a reference for other MSME actors to adopt similar technologies to support their business growth in the digital era.

Keywords: *WhatsApp Business, SME marketing, business applications, SME UKK Cake, phenomenology.*

Introduction

A prosperous life is the dream of every individual in fulfilling their economic needs, whether in the form of clothing, food, or shelter. This economic welfare does not only include fulfilling physical needs, but also includes improving the overall quality of life. To achieve this level of welfare, people try in various ways, one of which is by establishing micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs not only have an important role in creating jobs for the community, but also as the main driver of local economic growth which in turn will contribute to the national economy. Furthermore, MSMEs have the potential to equalize the distribution of wealth and reduce economic inequality between regions (Artika & Putra, 2024; Putra & Suseno, 2022). MSMEs also play a role in encouraging the creation of innovation in products and services offered to consumers. The vital role of MSMEs in the Indonesian economy has proven to be very significant, especially in dealing with the pressures of the crisis. For example, in the 1998 monetary crisis, many large companies went bankrupt and had financial difficulties. However, MSMEs have survived and even shown an increase in the number of business units and new jobs, reflecting the resilience of this sector amidst economic turmoil (Negara et al., 2022). The existence of these resilient MSMEs shows their enormous contribution to national economic stability and as a supporter of the economy of the lower classes who are more vulnerable to the impact of the crisis.

According to Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia Number 99 of 1998, MSMEs are defined as small and medium-scale people's economic activities, which need to be protected from unfair business competition. In this context, the existence of MSMEs must be seen as an important element in the broader economy, which supports the diversity of business sectors and creates jobs. The definition of MSMEs itself varies depending on the institution that examines it, such as in terms of turnover and assets as viewed by

.

financial institutions, the number of workers as viewed by BPS, and the scale of production as measured by Trade Ministry (BPS RI dan Bappenas RI, 2013). This shows that MSMEs are complex and multidimensional economic entities, not only limited to business size, but also encompassing broader social and cultural aspects. In this case, the definition of MSMEs serves to provide greater protection and development opportunities in various economic sectors, including the technology and digital sectors which are currently growing rapidly.

Along with the development of the times, advances in information technology have driven a huge transformation in various sectors, one of which is the marketing sector (Wijaya et al., 2023; Mendrofa, , 2024). This technological advancement has not only affected the way we communicate, but also the way we conduct economic transactions as a whole. The internet is now the main driver in the global economy, known as the digital economy. The existence of this digital economy opens up new opportunities for business actors, especially MSMEs, to reach consumers more widely at a more efficient cost (Azwar et al., 2025; (Putra & Suseno, 2022; Muis et al., 2022). Trading activities that are now widely carried out online are not only efficient in terms of time and cost, but also allow companies to carry out more precise and in-depth market segmentation, and build more personal relationships with customers (Yusuf et al., 2020). Digital marketing is now the main foundation in modern business strategies. No longer optional, digital marketing has become a must for every business actor, including MSMEs, to face increasingly fierce competition and increasingly digitally connected markets (Perdana et al., 2024;Syah Abadi, 2024).

Compared to conventional marketing, digital marketing has advantages in cost efficiency and the ability to reach a wider market more effectively, especially in targeting consumers through social media and instant messaging applications that are more familiar to the public. In the context of marketing, the main goal is to attract new customers and retain existing customers, as well as increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is achieved through the provision of products that are relevant to consumer needs, competitive pricing, effective distribution, and targeted promotional strategies. This process requires a deep understanding of consumer preferences and evolving market dynamics (Wijaya et al., 2023).

However, the marketing strategies implemented do not always have the same impact on all consumers, because purchasing decisions are greatly influenced by individual factors and environmental factors, including cultural, social, and psychological factors (Susyanto, 2019; Annas & Putra, 2024). Therefore, it is very important to conduct more in-depth research on the effect of using the WhatsApp Business application on MSME marketing, especially in increasing market reach, effectiveness of communication with customers, and achieving more optimal sales goals. This will provide a clearer understanding of how this application can be utilized to improve the competitiveness and effectiveness of MSME marketing in the fast-paced digital era (Perdana et al., 2024;Bungai et al., 2024)).

The development of digital technology has a significant impact on marketing strategies, one of which is the presence of the WhatsApp Business application. WhatsApp Business has become a very popular tool for MSMEs in carrying out their product communications and marketing. The choice of WhatsApp Business is driven by ease of access, relatively low costs, and its ability to reach consumers in a more personal and effective way. The main advantage of WhatsApp Business is its ability to provide fast and interactive responses to customers, which can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Features such as product catalogs, automatic replies, and message statistics provide competitive advantages for MSMEs in expanding their markets. This study aims to analyze the extent to which the WhatsApp Business application influences MSME marketing activities, with a case study on the UKK Cake MSME located in Pelaihari City. The selection of UKK Cake as the object of study is based on the fact that this business has been actively using WhatsApp Business in its daily operations, which can provide insight into the implementation of digital technology among local MSMEs.

Based on the description above, this study is very important to conduct because it can provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of using WhatsApp Business in MSME marketing strategies, especially in improving customer relationships and reaching a wider market. This study aims to analyze the effect of using WhatsApp Business on MSME marketing activities, with a case study on the MSME "UKK Cake" located in Pelaihari City.

Methods

This study uses a phenomenological approach, which is one of the methods in qualitative research. This approach was chosen because this study wants to explore in depth the subjective experiences of MSME actors in using the WhatsApp Business application as a marketing medium. The main focus of this study is not only to find out the results of using the application, but also to understand how business actors experience it in their daily practices.

Through a phenomenological approach, this study explores the meaning given by MSME actors to the use of WhatsApp Business in the context of promotional activities, communication with consumers, and order recording. The focus of this study is on one business unit, namely UKK Cake located in Pelaihari City, Tanah Laut Regency, South Kalimantan, which was chosen because it has actively used WhatsApp Business in its

.
marketing strategy. To obtain relevant and in-depth data, this study uses several data collection techniques through In-depth Interviews, and participatory observations, then analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which include several stages, namely data reduction, thematic coding, and content analysis. To ensure the validity of the data in this qualitative study, the researcher used several validation techniques, including: Source triangulation, Member Checking and Audit Trail.

Result and Discussion
Results
Based on the results of observations conducted by researchers for three days at the UKK Cake operation site, it was found that UKK Cake has been operating since 2022 and initially used regular WhatsApp as a means of communication and product marketing. However, after receiving recommendations from fellow MSME actors, UKK Cake decided to switch to WhatsApp Business. This transition has proven to have a significant impact in facilitating the marketing process and interaction with customers.

Some of the main features used by UKK Cake are the product catalog feature, which allows customers to view product photos, prices, and descriptions without having to wait for replies one by one. The label feature allows UKK Cake to group customers based on certain categories, such as new customers or customers who are currently placing orders, so that communication and promotions can be tailored to the needs of each group. The quick reply feature allows UKK Cake to provide a more efficient response to customer questions using pre-prepared message templates. In addition, the checkout feature allows customers to place orders and payments directly via WhatsApp, speeding up the transaction process.

The business profile and working hours features also make it easier for customers to find out important information about UKK Cake. The greeting feature for new customers provides a more personal and welcoming feel to customers, while the "away" feature helps UKK Cake notify customers of response times when they are unable to respond immediately.

Discussion
In this section, the discussion is conducted by connecting the research results with digital marketing theories and marketing communications. This study shows that WhatsApp Business makes a significant contribution to increasing the effectiveness of UKK Cake's communication and marketing. The discussion will be conducted by separating the features of WhatsApp Business and linking them to relevant theories.

Product Catalog Feature and Customer Shopping Experience
One of the features that UKK Cake feels the most benefit from is the product catalog feature. This feature allows customers to see a complete list of products with descriptions, prices, and photos without having to wait for a direct reply from the business owner. This is related to digital marketing theory which states that a platform that allows customers to access product information independently will improve a more efficient and enjoyable shopping experience (Wijaya et al., 2023). This study found that the use of a product catalog in WhatsApp Business provides a shopping experience similar to the shopping experience in e-commerce, allowing customers to choose products more easily and quickly.

This catalog feature also supports the marketing communication theory which states that the easier and faster a purchasing process is, the higher the customer satisfaction, which in turn can increase loyalty (Mendrofa et al., 2024). The effective use of a product catalog makes it easier for UKK Cake to increase customer satisfaction by providing full transparency of the products sold.

Label Feature and Customer Segmentation
The label feature in WhatsApp Business allows UKK Cake to group customers based on certain categories, such as new customers, repeat customers, or customers who are currently placing orders. This is very relevant to market segmentation theory, which suggests that separating customers into specific groups allows companies to carry out more targeted and relevant marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Wijaya et al., 2023)).

With the label feature, UKK Cake can send more relevant promotions or product information to each customer group. For example, they can provide special offers to repeat customers or promote new products to customers who are making their first purchase. Marketing techniques like this support more personal customer relationships and increase the likelihood of conversion from each interaction.

Quick Reply Feature and Response Speed
The quick reply feature on WhatsApp Business makes it easy for UKK Cake to respond to customer questions efficiently. In digital marketing, response speed is a very crucial factor in influencing purchasing

.

decisions, especially in fast-moving industries such as food and beverages (Groening & Binnewies, 2019). This study found that the use of automated message templates to answer common questions allows UKK Cake to provide a quick response, thereby reducing waiting time for customers.

The marketing theory that suggests that fast and responsive interactions can increase customer satisfaction and influence their loyalty ((Bungai et al., 2024)) is proven to be relevant to this finding. The speed in providing the information customers need not only increases efficiency but also strengthens better relationships with customers, thereby increasing the opportunity for repeat purchases.

Checkout Feature and Transaction Efficiency

The checkout feature that allows customers to order and pay for products directly via WhatsApp has proven effective in speeding up the transaction process. This feature strongly supports the marketing theory that focuses on convenience and ease in the purchasing process (Muhtadin, 2024). This study shows that by reducing the steps required to complete a transaction, customers can make purchases faster and easier, which in turn increases satisfaction and encourages more transactions.

This feature also supports the digital transformation of MSMEs, where MSMEs can leverage technology to simplify the transaction process and increase their competitiveness in the growing digital market.

Business Profile, Business Hours, and Business Transparency Features

The business profile and business hours feature provide much-needed transparency for UKK Cake in increasing customer trust. Transparency is an important element in effective marketing communications, where consumers feel more confident and comfortable interacting with a business (Yoesoep, 2022). With clear information about operating hours and contactable contacts, UKK Cake ensures that customers do not feel confused or disappointed when they want to contact this business.

Greeting Features for New Customers and Customer Experience

The greeting feature for new customers strengthens the first impression for customers who are interacting with UKK Cake for the first time. A positive first impression is essential in building long-term relationships with customers. This is in line with marketing theory which states that first impressions greatly influence consumer perceptions and decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This feature provides added value that contributes to customer loyalty from the beginning of their interaction with UKK Cake.

Away Feature and Effective Communication

The "away" feature allows UKK Cake to maintain effective communication even though they are unable to respond to direct messages. In the context of marketing communications, maintaining open communication even though they cannot respond immediately is important so that customers do not feel ignored. This feature gives the impression that UKK Cake cares about customers and is always ready to help, even with time constraints.

Overall, the use of WhatsApp Business has a significant impact on UKK Cake's marketing strategy. Through various features offered by WhatsApp Business, UKK Cake has succeeded in increasing efficiency in communicating with customers, accelerating transactions, and expanding their market reach. This shows that WhatsApp Business is not only a communication tool, but also an effective tool in accelerating the marketing and sales process for MSMEs. The implementation of these features, which are in accordance with the theory of digital marketing and marketing communications, allows UKK Cake to compete more effectively in this digital era.

Conclussion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the use of the WhatsApp Business application has a significant impact on the marketing of the "UKK Cake" UMKM in Pelaihari City. Before switching to WhatsApp Business, UKK Cake only used regular WhatsApp which was limited in terms of efficiency and management of communication with customers. After switching to WhatsApp Business, UKK Cake felt significant convenience in managing product communication and marketing, thanks to the features provided, such as product catalogs, customer labels, quick replies, checkout, business profiles, working hours, greetings for new customers, and the "not in place" feature.

These features have been proven to increase operational efficiency, speed up transactions, and provide a better customer experience. This is in line with digital marketing theory which shows that the use of effective digital communication tools can speed up the transaction process and increase customer satisfaction. In practice, this switch has had a positive impact on increasing sales and strengthening UKK Cake customer loyalty.

.

However, although the use of WhatsApp Business provides various advantages, this study also shows challenges in managing continuous messages. Although the quick reply feature and product catalog can reduce response time, business owners still need to monitor and manage incoming messages manually to maintain service quality and ensure customer satisfaction is maintained.

To improve operational efficiency, MSMEs are also advised to integrate WhatsApp Business with other business management systems, such as accounting and inventory management systems. This integration will help simplify transaction management and communication in a more organized manner, and allow business owners to monitor performance in real-time, which can help make decisions faster and more accurate. This research is limited to one case study at UKK Cake, and therefore, it is recommended to conduct further research on other MSMEs in various sectors and regions. Further research can delve deeper into the differences in the impact of using WhatsApp Business on various types of businesses and help provide more comprehensive guidance for MSME actors in Indonesia

References

Annas, N., & Putra, F. A. (2024). Peran Kepuasan Kerja dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Pegawai: Perspektif Mediasi Lingkungan dan Keselamatan Kerja. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, *4*(2).

Artika, & Putra, F. A. (2024). Analisis Strategi Pemasaran Terhadap Peningkatan Penjualan (Studi Kasus Pada Umkm Toko Nurhidayah Di Kabupaten Majene , Sulawesi Barat). *Jurnal Valuasi: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Manajemen Dan Kewirausahaan Jurusan Manajemen Fakultas Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Universitas Bina Bangsa*, *4*, 369–386.

Azwar, A., Yulianti, I., Hidayati, S., & Putra, F. A. (2025). OPTIMIZING FRESHWATER LOBSTER MARKETING STRATEGY : AN SEO OPTIMIZING FRESHWATER LOBSTER MARKETING STRATEGY : AN SEO. *International Seminar Conference of Economics and Business Excellence 1*, *1*(January), 721–727.

BPS RI dan Bappenas RI. (2013). Proyeksi Penduduk Indonesia Indonesia Population Projection 2010-2035. In *Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia* (Vol. 90, Issue 6). Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia. https://doi.org/https://www.bappenas.go.id/files/5413/9148/4109/Proyeksi_Penduduk_Indonesia_2010-2035.pdf

Bungai, J., Setiawan, H., Putra, F. A., Sakti, B. P., & Sukoco, H. (2024). Digital Marketing Strategy in Education Management: Increasing School Visibility and Attractiveness. *Al-Fikrah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, *12*(1), 110. https://doi.org/10.31958/jaf.v12i1.12318

Groening, C., & Binnewies, C. (2019). "Achievement unlocked!" - The impact of digital achievements as a gamification element on motivation and performance. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *97*(March 2019), 151–166. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.02.026

Muis, A., Suseno, B. D., Fatoni, M., Mulyadi, & Shamshiz, N. (2022). Entrepreneurial Characteristics : Predictors of Village- Owned Enterprises Governance. *RELEVANCE: Journal of Management and Business*, *5*(2), 117–135.

Negara, J. A., Tenaga, D., Koperasi, D., Mikro, U., Menengah, K., Masyarakat, P., & Berencana, D. K. (2022). *Sawala MASYARAKAT DI KABUPATEN SERANG Sawala Dalam mengantisipasi berbagai dampak pandemi covid-19 di Kabupaten Serang , pemberdayaan masyarakat . Program inovasi tersebut diharapkan dapat memperkokoh tantangan pasca Pandemi Covid-19 dengan memperbaiki da*. *10*(1), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.30656/sawala.v10i1.4755

Perdana, I., Kamaruddin, M. J., Rijal, S., & Putra, F. A. (2024). Social Media Marketing Strategy in Increasing Student Enrollment and Retention Social Media Marketing Strategy in Increasing Student Enrollment and Retention. *Al-Fikrah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, *12 (1)*(June 2024), 202–213. https://doi.org/10.31958/jaf.v12i1.5799

Putra, F. A., & Suseno, B. D. (2022). Industrial Revolution 4.0 as a Strategic Issue of Higher Education. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, *10*(02), 3045–3051. https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsrm/v10i2.em05

Susyanto, H. (2019). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan, Keterlibatan Karyawan Dan Kepuasan Kerja Terhadap Kesiapan Untuk Berubah Dalam Menghadapi Perubahan Organisasi. *Jurnal Ekonomi, Bisnis, Dan Akuntansi*, *21*(1). https://doi.org/10.32424/jeba.v21i1.1287

Syah Abadi Mendrofa, S.E., M.M. Meci Nilam Sari, S.Pd., M.A.B. Anang Martoyo, M.M. Feby Arma Putra, S.Pd., M.Si., M.M. Dr. Librina Tria Putri, S.E., M M. Dr. Bunga Aditi, S.E., M.Si. Ir. Yenni Jufri, M.Si. Mispandi, S.Pd., M.Pd. Dr. Sudarsono, SE., M.M. D, M. C. (2024). Manajemen Pemasaran Digital. In *CV Mega Press Nusantara* (Vol. 11, Issue 1). http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahtt

.
ps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI

Wijaya, A., Putra, F. A., Dermawan, I., Siahanti, M., Fitriani, H., Kurniawan, W., Samsudin, U., Rahayu, S., Hakin, L., & Munadiyan, A. El. (2023). *Manajemen Pemasaran (Marketing Mix 7P Produk Barang dan Jasa)* (1st ed., Vol. 2, Issue 1). Penerbit Laikesha.

Yusuf, R., Hendawati, H., & Wibowo, L. A. (2020). Pengaruh Konten Pemasaran Shoppe Terhadap Pembelian Pelanggan. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dan IImu Sosial*, *1*(2), 506–515. https://doi.org/10.38035/JMPIS

Authors' Bibliography
Sumeta
Born in Laburan- Kotabaru, October 4th, 1996. Now she is a student of in Indonesia Open University. This His research spans Human resources management, Strategic Management, contributing significantly to learning practices. His educational Background:
1. Bachelor of Management Study Program in Indonesia Open University

. The first author was responsible for initiating and developing the research topic, conducting a comprehensive literature review, designing the research methodology, collecting and analyzing the primary data from the case study, and drafting the full manuscript. The student also interpreted the findings in relation to the research objectives and ensured that the results aligned with the study's aims.
.

Feby Arma Putra
Born in Arga Makmur-North Bengkulu at Novermber 16th 1984. Now He is a Lecturer at Public Sector of HRM Study Program, Politeknik PGRI Banten and Tutor in Indonesia Open University. His research spans Human resources management, Strategic Management, contributing significantly to learning practices. His educational Background:
1. Bachelor of English Education in University of Bengkulu, Bengkulu, Indonesia.
2. Master Degree of Human Resources Management in Universitas Bina Bangsa, Serang, Indonesia.
3. Master of Science in Public Administration, In STIA Menara Siswa, Bogor, Indonesia. His research spans

The second author acted as the academic supervisor, providing guidance throughout the research process. This included advising on the formulation of research questions, refining the research design, and ensuring methodological rigor. The advisor also reviewed and provided critical feedback on multiple drafts of the manuscript to enhance its academic quality, coherence, and relevance to the field of study.