

HOW EFFECTIVE IS VISUAL CONTENT IN DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS FOR MSMEs?**Muh. Husriadi ***

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology has changed the way MSMEs interact with customers, but many still have difficulty implementing effective marketing strategies. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of visual content in digital marketing campaigns for MSMEs. The method used is a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews and content analysis from 10 MSMEs that are active on social media. The results of the study indicate that the use of visual content, such as short videos and infographics, increases customer interaction, market reach and sales. Engagement metrics such as views, likes, and comments provide important insights into audience response. The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of a planned visual content strategy to increase MSME engagement and sales in the digital era. This study recommends the use of easily accessible design tools and regular measurement of content effectiveness to achieve optimal results.

Keywords: Visual Content, Digital Marketing, SMEs, Customer Engagement, Sales.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to the business world, including for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (Gamage et al. 2020) . In the digital era, MSMEs face increasingly complex challenges due to increasing global market competition (Hendrawan et al. 2024; S. Chandra Sekhar | N. Radha 2019) .However, this transformation also opens up great opportunities for MSMEs to utilize digital marketing as a strategic tool in expanding their marketing reach (Gamage et al. 2020) . Visual content, such as images and videos, is an important element in attracting audience attention and increasing user engagement (Wang, Wu, and Song 2024) . Although digital marketing offers great potential for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), many of them have not utilized visual content optimally in their marketing campaigns (Mehralian and Khazaee 2022; Sharabati et al. 2024) . This is due to a lack of understanding and skills in using available digital tools, which in turn hinders the effectiveness of marketing strategies (Cham et al. 2022; Malchyk et al. 2022; Mehralian and Khazaee 2022; Sharabati et al. 2024) .

Many MSMEs still rely on traditional methods, making them unable to compete effectively in an increasingly competitive market (Dambiski Gomes de Carvalho et al. 2021; Tambunan 2022) . Although there have been a number of studies discussing the use of visual content in digital marketing, the existing literature still shows a significant gap in in-depth analysis of the integration of visual content into marketing strategies for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (Arslan and Ghazal 2024; Dambiski Gomes de Carvalho et al. 2021; Lin and Yazdanifard 2014; Shen 2025) . Many existing studies tend to focus on technical or aesthetic aspects, without comprehensively exploring how visual content can be optimized to increase engagement and conversion (Arslan and Ghazal 2024; Dambiski Gomes de Carvalho et al. 2021; Lin and Yazdanifard 2014; Shen 2025) . Therefore, the main objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of visual content in digital marketing campaigns for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the contemporary fastfood sector in Kendari City. By focusing on the use of attractive and relevant visual content, this study aims to provide practical guidance that can help MSMEs optimize their marketing strategies. With the hope that the results of this study will not only provide academic insight, but also become a valuable resource for MSME actors in increasing competitiveness in the increasingly dynamic digital market.

This study emphasizes a new aspect by focusing on the effectiveness of visual content in the context of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the fastfood sector in the ever-growing digital era. In an increasingly competitive business environment, a deep understanding of how visual content can influence consumer behavior and increase engagement is essential. The justification for this study lies in its contribution to the development of more effective marketing strategies for fast food players, by optimally utilizing the potential of visual content. Thus, the results of the study are expected to provide practical and theoretical guidance for MSME players in designing successful digital marketing campaigns.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative design with a descriptive approach to explore the effectiveness of visual content in MSME digital marketing campaigns. The research procedure involves data collection stages through in-depth interviews and direct observation of visual content used by MSMEs. Data collection techniques are carried out using semi-structured interviews with MSME actors and analysis of their digital content documentation. The collected data are analyzed using thematic analysis methods, which aim to identify patterns, themes, and relationships that are relevant to the effectiveness of visual content in marketing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Customer Interaction

The findings of this study show a clear increase in the number of comments and direct messages received by MSMEs after implementing a visual content strategy. Based on the results of interviews with key respondents, customers became more active in interacting, providing positive feedback, and engaging in discussions related to the products offered. In addition, high-quality visual content, such as photos and videos, can drastically increase customer engagement. Furthermore, visual content also encourages customers to share information about products on social media, thereby expanding the market reach of MSMEs. This is in line with the results of studies (Crespo, Ferreira, and Cardoso 2023; Vences, Díaz-Campo, and Rosales 2020; Yang and Dongqi 2025) that the use of attractive photos and videos not only increases brand visibility but also creates a stronger emotional connection between the brand and the audience. With the increasing amount of content shared by customers, MSMEs can reach new audiences organically, which has the potential to increase sales. Therefore, the results of this study confirm that visual content not only functions as a promotional tool but also as a means to build closer relationships with customers. In the context of an increasingly competitive digital market, the ability to attract attention and maintain customer engagement through visual content is the key to the success of MSME marketing strategies in this digital era.

B. Effective Content Types

Based on the results of this study, it shows that short videos, which are able to convey information quickly and attractively, are one of the most effective formats. Based on the results of interviews with key respondents, product videos that show how to use them directly not only attract attention but also help customers understand the benefits of the product better. In addition, high-quality promotional videos often generate positive feedback from consumers. Infographics also play an important role in conveying information concisely and attractively. This content combines text and visuals to explain data or processes in an easy-to-understand way. This is in line with the results of the study (Karpenka et al. 2021) that attractive infographics can increase brand awareness and help consumers remember important information about the product. Demonstrating how to use a product through visual content not only provides added value to customers but also builds trust in the brand. When customers see how a product is used in a real context, they are more likely to make a purchase. Furthermore, research (Cheng, Shao, and Zhang 2022) shows that informative and relevant visual content can increase purchasing decisions by up to 40%. Thus, overall, effective types of visual content play a crucial role in MSME digital marketing strategies, increasing customer engagement, expanding market reach, and driving positive purchasing decisions in today's digital era.

C. Increased Market Reach

The implementation of visual content in the digital marketing strategy of MSMEs has resulted in a significant increase in reach. Based on the results of this study, it shows that the audience is more interested in following accounts that present high-quality visual content, such as product photos and videos. In addition, based on the results of the interview, it was found that there was demand from new customers who were interested in product variants, most of which came from recommendations from friends or family who saw the visual content. This is in line with the results of the study (Adami and Jewitt 2016; Ramadhanayanti et al. 2022) that engaging visual content can increase social media sharing rates by up to 60%. With the increasing amount of content shared by the audience, MSMEs not only expand their reach but also build brand credibility through social proof. Therefore, the results of this study confirm that the use of visual content not only increases product visibility but also creates new opportunities for MSMEs to reach a wider market. In the context of fierce competition in the digital era, the ability to attract attention and maintain customer engagement through visual content is very important for the success of MSME marketing.

D. Effectiveness of Visual Content

The use of visual content in MSME digital marketing campaigns has proven to be very effective in increasing engagement and sales. Based on the results of this study, it shows that analysis of engagement metrics, such as the number of views, likes, and comments, provides clear insight into the audience's response to the content presented. Based on the results of the interview, it was found that there was an increase in sales after implementing an attractive and informative visual content strategy. In addition, high-quality product photos and professionally designed promotional videos often get positive feedback from consumers, which contributes to purchasing decisions. Based on the results of the analysis, customers not only see visual content, but also actively engage with the brand through higher interactions. This shows that the increase in the number of comments and sharing of content on social media also reflects greater interest from the audience. This is in line with the results of the study (Negm and Tantawi 2015) that the use of attractive visual elements can increase brand awareness and help create a positive impression in the minds of consumers. Therefore, the results of this study indicate that visual content is not only a promotional tool, but also an important strategy to increase customer engagement and sales in the context of MSME digital marketing.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The conclusion of this study shows that the use of visual content in MSME digital marketing campaigns significantly increases customer interaction, market reach, and sales. Content types such as short videos and infographics have proven effective in capturing audience attention, while engagement metrics such as views, likes, and comments provide

valuable insights into customer responses. The increase in followers and sales confirm the importance of a well-planned and engaging visual content strategy. Therefore, the advice for MSMEs in the contemporary fastfood sector is to continue to develop and utilize visual content in marketing strategies, it is necessary to use easily accessible design tools, such as Canva, so that it can help create high-quality content without requiring in-depth design skills.

In addition, it is important for today's fastfood businesses to measure the effectiveness of visual content regularly by analyzing engagement and sales metrics. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the impact of audience demographics on the effectiveness of visual content as well as the potential use of new technologies in digital marketing. Thus, MSMEs can better adjust their strategies to meet the evolving market needs in this digital era.

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