



THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF MICRO, SMALL, AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMES) IN MAROS REGENCY

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Accepted :

23 March 2026

Published :

26 March 2026

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of language in digital marketing strategies and its impact on the performance of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Maros Regency. Language plays a vital role in creating persuasive communication, attracting audiences, and maintaining customer relationships in digital platforms. However, many MSME actors still face challenges in utilizing effective and engaging language in their digital content. This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey method involving 60 MSME actors selected through purposive sampling, with criteria including at least one year of business operation and active use of social media for promotion. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using validity, reliability, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression. The results indicate that digital marketing variables have a positive and significant effect on MSME performance, with the linguistic quality of digital content as the most dominant factor. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.643 shows that digital marketing accounts for 64.3% of the variation in MSME performance. These findings emphasize the importance of strategic language use in enhancing digital marketing effectiveness and improving MSME competitiveness.

Keywords: *language, digital marketing, MSME performance, digital content, social media.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in both national and regional economic development because they create employment opportunities, increase community income, and strengthen local economic structures (Anuari et al., 2024; Damiyana et al., 2024; Alcamo et al., 2020). In Indonesia, MSMEs have proven to be a major pillar of economic resilience, particularly in responding to global economic changes and crisis pressures. Their flexible and adaptive characteristics allow MSMEs to survive in dynamic business

environments and changing market conditions (Tambunan, 2020; OECD, 2021). Furthermore, MSMEs contribute significantly to economic growth and local development by supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in various sectors (World Bank, 2022).

Over the past decade, the rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed marketing practices. Traditional marketing approaches that relied heavily on face-to-face interaction and conventional promotional media have gradually shifted toward digital-based marketing

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strategies. Consumers today increasingly rely on the internet and social media platforms as primary sources of information before making purchasing decisions (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). Digital platforms not only function as promotional tools but also serve as interactive communication channels that enable businesses to engage directly with customers in real time (Suprayogi et al., 2024; Jones & Flint, 2022).

Within this digital environment, language plays a crucial role in shaping effective marketing communication. The language used in digital content such as captions, product descriptions, advertisements, and customer responses can influence consumer perceptions, trust, and engagement. Persuasive, clear, and interactive language contributes to building stronger relationships between businesses and customers in online environments (Fill & Turnbull, 2019; Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). Therefore, the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies is not determined solely by technological adoption but also by how business actors communicate their value propositions through language (Ntumba et al., 2023; Ziyadin et al., 2019; Anuari et al., 2024).

Digital marketing offers several advantages for MSMEs, including relatively low promotional costs, broader market reach, and the ability to build long-term customer relationships. Through social media and other digital platforms, business actors can promote their products beyond geographical boundaries while also receiving direct feedback from customers. In addition, digital marketing enables MSMEs to enhance product visibility and

strengthen brand image through creative and engaging communication strategies (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Consequently, the ability to utilize digital platforms and develop effective marketing communication has become a key determinant of business competitiveness in the digital economy (Roshan et al., 2024; Lukita et al., 2023; UNCTAD, 2022).

Maros Regency, which serves as a supporting economic area for the Makassar metropolitan region, has experienced significant growth in MSME-based economic activities. The expansion of culinary businesses, retail trade, and home-based services reflects the increasing economic mobility of the local community. However, the level of digital technology utilization in marketing activities among MSMEs still varies considerably. Although some business actors have started using social media as a promotional tool, its application is often limited and not supported by well-structured digital marketing strategies or effective communication practices.

Preliminary observations indicate that many MSMEs in Maros Regency use social media mainly as a platform for uploading product photos without consistent content management or clear customer communication strategies. Promotional content is often unstructured, product descriptions are not persuasive, and customer interaction is not optimally utilized as part of a broader marketing strategy. As a result, the potential benefits of digital marketing have not yet been fully realized in improving business performance.

Previous studies have shown that digital marketing has a positive impact on business performance, particularly in increasing sales, expanding market reach, and strengthening customer engagement (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). However, most of these studies were conducted in large urban areas with relatively high levels of digital literacy. Research examining digital marketing practices in semi-urban or regional economic buffer areas remains limited. MSMEs in such regions often face different challenges related to technological access, digital literacy, and local market characteristics.

Furthermore, many previous studies focus primarily on the adoption of digital technology as the main determinant of MSME performance. This perspective does not fully explain how the quality of digital marketing implementation, particularly the use of language in digital content and customer communication, contributes to business success. In practice, the use of digital platforms without strategic communication often fails to produce optimal outcomes.

Based on this background, a research gap exists between the increasing use of social media by MSME actors and the limited improvement in business performance. This study attempts to address this gap by examining digital marketing not only as a technological tool but also as a strategic communication process that emphasizes the role of language, including social media utilization, the linguistic quality of digital content, and online customer interaction.

The novelty of this research lies in its analytical approach that emphasizes the role of language within digital marketing strategies in the context of MSMEs in regional economic buffer areas, particularly Maros Regency. This study provides empirical insights into how well-managed digital communication and persuasive marketing language can influence the performance of small-scale businesses. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute both academically to the development of digital marketing studies in local contexts and practically to MSME actors and regional policymakers.

Based on the background above, the objective of this study is to analyze the influence of social media utilization, the linguistic quality of digital content, and online customer interaction on the performance of MSMEs in Maros Regency. The findings are expected to support the development of MSME digital capacity strategies and provide policy recommendations for promoting regional digital economic transformation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is a modern marketing concept that utilizes internet technology and digital media as the primary means of delivering product value to consumers. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022), digital marketing refers to the use of digital technologies, online platforms, and interactive media to achieve marketing objectives through integrated and measurable communication. This definition emphasizes that digital marketing is not

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merely a promotional medium but also a strategic communication approach that enables two-way interaction between businesses and customers.

Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) explain that digital marketing represents part of the evolution of marketing toward the era of Marketing 5.0, where technology is used to understand consumer behavior more deeply through digital data and analytics. This approach allows companies to create more personalized and relevant customer experiences. Meanwhile, Ryan (2022) states that digital marketing encompasses various activities such as social media marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization, and communication through digital platforms aimed at increasing customer engagement.

In this context, language plays an essential role in digital marketing communication. The effectiveness of digital marketing strategies often depends on how businesses communicate product value through persuasive, clear, and engaging language in digital content, including product descriptions, captions, advertisements, and customer interactions. Appropriate language use helps attract audience attention, build trust, and strengthen relationships with customers in online environments (Kartika et al., 2024; Lesiana et al., 2023; Jaya et al., 2025).

For Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), digital marketing becomes an important strategy because it enables businesses to expand their market reach at relatively low promotional costs while fostering sustainable customer relationships (Suprayogi et al., 2024; Nuraina et al., 2025; Soltanifar et al., 2021). Therefore, digital marketing should not only be understood as the use of technology but also as a strategic approach that integrates communication, language, data, and

customer experience in modern marketing practices.

b. Business Performance

Business performance is an indicator used to evaluate the level of success of an organization or business unit in achieving its predetermined objectives, both from financial and non-financial perspectives. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), business performance reflects the outcomes obtained by a company through marketing and operational activities, which can be measured through sales growth, increased market share, and customer satisfaction. This concept highlights that business success is not only determined by financial profit but also by the ability to maintain long-term relationships with customers (Shortt et al., 2023; Titiek et al., 2023; Lee & Raschke, 2020).

Kaplan and Norton (2020), through the Balanced Scorecard approach, explain that business performance should be measured comprehensively through four main perspectives: financial performance, customer perspective, internal business processes, and learning and growth. This framework suggests that business success depends on the balance between operational efficiency and the organization's capacity for innovation and development.

Furthermore, Tjiptono (2018) states that business performance in the context of small and medium enterprises can be measured through practical indicators such as increased sales volume, growth in the number of customers, customer loyalty, and the ability of businesses to survive in competitive markets. In MSMEs, performance measurement often emphasizes business growth and sustainability rather than complex financial indicators.

In relation to digital marketing strategies, business performance can also be

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influenced by the effectiveness of communication with customers through digital platforms. The ability of MSME actors to use appropriate and persuasive language in digital marketing content can enhance customer engagement, strengthen brand perception, and ultimately improve business performance. Therefore, the role of language in digital marketing communication becomes an important factor in supporting the competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs in the digital economy.

3. METHODS***Research Method***

This study employed a quantitative research design with an explanatory research approach to analyze the relationship between digital marketing variables and MSME performance in Maros Regency (Neuman, 2019; Sugiyono, 2021). The population of this study consisted of active Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) actors in Maros Regency. From this population, 60 respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria: (1) the business had been operating for at least one year, (2) the business used social media as a promotional medium, and (3) the business had been actively selling products within the last six months.

Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5) (Robinson, 2024). The variables measured in this study included social media utilization (X1), digital content quality (X2), and online customer interaction (X3) as independent variables, while MSME performance (Y) served as the dependent variable. Social media utilization was measured through indicators such as posting frequency, online promotional activities, and the use of digital platforms. Digital content quality was measured

through product visual presentation, clarity of information, and creativity of promotional content. Online customer interaction included responsiveness to messages, comment engagement, and the ability to build relationships with customers. Meanwhile, MSME performance was measured through indicators such as sales growth, the number of customers, and profit improvement.

The data analysis techniques included validity testing using Pearson Product Moment, reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity), and multiple linear regression analysis to examine the influence of the independent variables on MSME performance (Ahmad & Idris, 2025; Field, 2024).

Research Results

The validity test results indicate that all questionnaire items have correlation coefficients (r-count) greater than 0.30, meaning that all measurement items are considered valid and suitable for further analysis. The reliability test results show that each research variable has a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70, indicating that the instruments used are reliable. Specifically, the Cronbach's Alpha values are 0.81 for social media utilization, 0.85 for digital content quality, 0.79 for online interaction, and 0.83 for MSME performance, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency.

The classical assumption tests also confirm that the regression model meets the required statistical assumptions. The normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method produced a significance

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value of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the data are normally distributed. The multicollinearity test shows that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for social media utilization (1.42), digital content quality (1.55), and online interaction (1.37) are all below the threshold value of 10, indicating that no multicollinearity problem exists among the independent variables. Furthermore, the heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser method indicates significance values greater than 0.05, confirming that heteroscedasticity is not present in the regression model.

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis produce the regression equation:

$$Y = 1.245 + 0.312X_1 + 0.428X_2 + 0.276X_3$$

This equation indicates that all independent variables have a positive effect on MSME performance. Among the variables examined, digital content quality (X_2) shows the largest regression coefficient (0.428), indicating that it has the strongest influence on MSME performance compared to the other variables.

The partial test (t-test) results reveal that social media utilization has a t-value of 2.87 with a significance value of 0.006, indicating a significant positive effect on MSME performance. Digital content quality has a t-value of 3.95 with a significance value of 0.000, showing a highly significant effect on MSME performance. Meanwhile, online customer interaction has a t-value of 2.41 with a significance value of 0.019, also indicating a significant positive influence. These results confirm that each independent variable individually

contributes to improving MSME performance.

The simultaneous test (F-test) produces an F-value of 33.21 with a significance value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance threshold of 0.05. This indicates that social media utilization, digital content quality, and online customer interaction simultaneously have a significant effect on MSME performance.

Finally, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.643, which means that 64.3% of the variation in MSME performance can be explained by digital marketing variables, including social media utilization, digital content quality, and online interaction. The remaining 35.7% is influenced by other factors outside the research model, such as product quality, pricing strategy, market competition, or managerial capabilities.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that effective digital marketing strategies particularly those supported by high-quality digital content and active customer interaction play a significant role in improving the performance of MSMEs in Maros Regency.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Research Respondents

This study involved 60 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) actors in Maros Regency who met the purposive sampling criteria, namely businesses that had been operating for at least one year and actively used social media as a promotional medium. Analyzing the characteristics of respondents is important to understand the empirical context of the study and to

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ensure that the findings are relevant to the actual conditions of local business actors.

Based on the type of business, the majority of respondents operate in the culinary sector (45%), followed by retail trade (30%), services (15%), and crafts or creative products (10%). The dominance of the culinary sector indicates that consumption-based businesses are one of the main drivers of MSME economic activity in Maros Regency. This characteristic is also closely related to digital marketing practices, as culinary businesses rely heavily on product visualization and persuasive promotional communication. In this context, the use of effective and engaging language in digital marketing content, such as captions, product descriptions, and promotional messages, plays an important role in attracting consumer attention.

In terms of business duration, 53% of respondents have operated their businesses for 1–3 years, 32% for 4–6 years, and 15% for more than 6 years. These data indicate that most MSMEs are in the early growth stage, where marketing strategies including digital communication and language use play a crucial role in expanding market reach and increasing competitiveness.

Regarding the use of digital platforms, all respondents reported using social media as a marketing tool, with Instagram and WhatsApp Business being the most dominant platforms. However, most MSME actors have not yet implemented marketing strategies based on data analytics or systematic content planning. This finding supports the initial assumption that MSME digitalization in Maros Regency is still at a basic adoption stage, where the role of strategic communication and language management in digital marketing has not been fully optimized.

Instrument Testing Results**1) Validity Test**

The validity test was conducted using Pearson Product Moment correlation to ensure that each indicator accurately measures the intended variable construct. The results show that all questionnaire items have correlation values greater than 0.30 with significance levels below 0.05. Therefore, all indicators measuring social media utilization, digital content quality, online customer interaction, and MSME performance are considered valid.

The validity of the instrument indicates that the questionnaire items are capable of empirically representing the digital marketing phenomena experienced by MSME actors in Maros Regency, including aspects related to the effectiveness of communication and language used in digital marketing content.

2) Reliability Test

The reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha produced the following values:

- Social Media Utilization = 0.812
- Digital Content Quality = 0.845
- Online Customer Interaction = 0.801
- MSME Performance = 0.836

All values are above the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating that the research instrument is reliable. This result demonstrates the consistency of respondents' answers and the stability of the measurement tool in explaining the research variables.

Classical Assumption Tests

Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, classical assumption tests were carried out to ensure that the

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regression model met the necessary statistical requirements.

1) Normality Test

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test produced a significance value of 0.200 (> 0.05), indicating that the data are normally distributed.

2) Multicollinearity Test

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range between 1.37 and 1.55, which are well below the threshold value of 10. This indicates that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

3) Heteroscedasticity Test

The Glejser test shows significance values greater than 0.05 for all variables, indicating that the regression model is free from heteroscedasticity problems.

Since all classical assumptions have been fulfilled, the regression model is considered appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The results of the regression analysis produced the following equation:

$$Y=1.245+0.312X_1+0.428X_2+0.276X_3$$

Where:

- X_1 = Social Media Utilization
- X_2 = Digital Content Quality (including the effectiveness of language used in digital content)
- X_3 = Online Customer Interaction
- Y = MSME Performance

The regression coefficients indicate that all independent variables have

positive effects on MSME performance. Among these variables, digital content quality (X_2) has the highest coefficient, indicating that the effectiveness of digital content—including the clarity, attractiveness, and persuasive language used in communication—has the strongest influence on MSME performance.

Hypothesis Testing**Partial Test (t-test)**

Variable	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Social Media Utilization	2.89	0.006	H1 Accepted
Digital Content Quality	4.72	0.000	H2 Accepted
Online Customer Interaction	2.41	0.019	H3 Accepted

All research hypotheses are accepted because the significance values are less than 0.05. This indicates that each independent variable individually has a significant effect on MSME performance.

Simultaneous Test (F-test)

The F-value of 33.21 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that digital marketing variables collectively have a significant influence on MSME performance. This result demonstrates that the combination of social media utilization, digital content quality, and online interaction significantly contributes to improving the performance of MSMEs.

Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.643, meaning that 64.3% of the variation in MSME performance can be explained by digital marketing variables, particularly the use of social media, the quality of digital content, and online

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customer interaction. The remaining 35.7% is influenced by other factors outside the research model, such as product quality, pricing strategies, and business management practices.

These findings highlight that the effectiveness of language and communication strategies within digital marketing content plays an important role in strengthening customer engagement and improving the performance of MSMEs in Maros Regency.

Discussion

The results of this study show that social media plays an important role in improving the performance of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Maros Regency. The use of platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Instagram, and Facebook allows business actors to promote their products more widely and efficiently. Through social media, MSMEs can reach customers beyond their local markets and expand their business visibility. In addition, these platforms facilitate two-way communication between businesses and consumers, which strengthens trust and increases customer engagement. As explained by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022), social media has become a strategic digital marketing tool that enables businesses to build relationships with customers and enhance brand visibility.

Another important finding of this study is that the quality of digital content significantly affects MSME performance. Content that is visually attractive, informative, and consistently presented can capture consumer attention and create a positive perception of the product (Kurnianingsih, 2022). High-quality product photos, clear descriptions, and persuasive communication help customers understand the value of the product before making a purchase

decision. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) emphasize that in the era of digital marketing, content plays a crucial role in creating meaningful customer experiences and strengthening emotional engagement between businesses and consumers.

Furthermore, online customer interaction is also found to have a significant influence on business performance. Quick responses to customer inquiries, active communication through comments or direct messages, and the ability to address customer needs effectively contribute to higher customer satisfaction. This interaction helps build long-term relationships with consumers and encourages repeat purchases. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), relationship marketing emphasizes continuous communication with customers as a key factor in developing customer loyalty and sustaining business growth.

The study also highlights the importance of integrating different elements of digital marketing. MSMEs that combine social media usage, high-quality digital content, and active customer interaction tend to achieve better business outcomes compared to those that adopt digital tools only partially (Soughati et al., 2025). Integrated marketing communication ensures that promotional messages remain consistent across digital platforms and strengthens the brand image in the minds of consumers. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022) explain that effective digital marketing strategies require coordination between content, platforms, and customer engagement in order to create a comprehensive customer experience.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in improving the

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competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs in Maros Regency. The ability of business actors to manage social media, create high-quality digital content, and maintain active communication with customers contributes significantly to increased sales, broader market reach, and stronger customer loyalty. Therefore, continuous digital literacy training and strategic guidance from local governments and stakeholders are essential to support MSMEs in adapting to the rapidly evolving digital economy.

5. CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the role of digital marketing in improving MSME performance in Maros Regency through social media utilization, digital content quality, and online customer interaction. The results show that all variables have a positive and significant effect on performance. Social media expands market reach and enables direct, cost-effective communication. Digital content quality is the most dominant factor, as engaging and consistent content builds trust and drives purchasing decisions. Online customer interaction enhances satisfaction and loyalty through responsive communication. Overall, digital marketing strengthens MSME competitiveness and sustainability, especially when supported by effective communication and language use in digital content.

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