

## **UTILIZATION OF WEBSITES AS A DIGITAL PROMOTIONAL MEDIUM FOR LOCAL MSMEs**

### **PEMANFAATAN WEBSITE SEBAGAI MEDIA PROMOSI DIGITAL BAGI UMKM LOKAL**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in Indonesia's economy through their contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment generation. However, many local MSMEs still rely heavily on third-party digital platforms for promotion, limiting their control over brand identity, customer data, and long-term marketing sustainability. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of websites as strategic digital promotional media for local MSMEs based on the concepts of Marketing 4.0 and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of scholarly publications published between 2020 and 2025. The findings show that professionally managed websites can increase MSME brand awareness, including brand recognition and brand recall. In addition, previous studies indicate a positive relationship between website utilization and the development of MSME business scale at the local level. Nevertheless, website adoption among MSMEs still faces several challenges, particularly low digital literacy and limited supporting infrastructure. Only a small proportion of MSME actors have reached an advanced level of digital capability. This study concludes that websites can serve as strategic digital assets by enabling independent data management and sustainable search engine optimization (SEO). Furthermore, collaboration between policymakers and academics is necessary to support and accelerate inclusive digital transformation for MSMEs.*

**Keywords:** MSMEs, Website, Digital Promotion, Marketing 4.0, Brand Awareness.

#### **ABSTRAK**

Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) memiliki posisi penting dalam perekonomian Indonesia karena kontribusinya terhadap Produk Domestik Bruto (PDB) serta penyerapan tenaga kerja. Namun, strategi promosi digital UMKM lokal masih banyak bergantung pada platform pihak ketiga yang dikendalikan algoritma eksternal. Kondisi ini membatasi pelaku usaha dalam mengelola identitas merek, data pelanggan, dan keberlanjutan pemasaran jangka panjang. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji peran website sebagai media promosi digital strategis bagi UMKM lokal dengan mengacu pada teori Marketing 4.0 dan *Technology Acceptance Model* (TAM). Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif melalui metode *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) terhadap publikasi ilmiah tahun 2020–2025. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pengelolaan website secara profesional berpotensi meningkatkan kesadaran merek UMKM, khususnya pada aspek *brand recognition* dan *brand recall*. Selain itu, beberapa penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif antara pemanfaatan website dan perkembangan skala usaha UMKM di tingkat lokal. Meski demikian, adopsi website oleh UMKM masih menghadapi kendala signifikan, terutama rendahnya literasi digital dan keterbatasan infrastruktur pendukung. Hanya sebagian kecil pelaku UMKM yang mencapai tingkat kapasitas digital lanjutan. Oleh karena itu, website dapat dipahami sebagai aset digital strategis yang mendukung pengelolaan data secara mandiri dan optimalisasi mesin pencari (SEO) secara berkelanjutan.

**Kata Kunci:** UMKM, Website, Promosi Digital, Marketing 4.0, Brand Awareness.

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## INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the main pillars of the Indonesian economy, contributing approximately 60 percent to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorbing up to 97 percent of the national workforce. This strategic role makes MSMEs a key factor in maintaining macroeconomic stability and promoting equitable income distribution. However, despite their significant contribution, MSMEs still face various structural challenges, particularly in terms of market access and the effectiveness of promotional strategies, most of which remain conventional.

The development of information and communication technology has encouraged digital transformation in the global business ecosystem, including the MSME sector. The Indonesian government has targeted the acceleration of MSME digitalization as a driving force of the economy, with the projected value of the digital-based MSME economy continuing to increase. Nevertheless, reality shows a gap between potential and practice in the field. Uneven digital literacy levels have caused many MSMEs to be unable to optimally utilize digital technology to improve competitiveness and business income.

This condition is also reflected in Makassar City as one of the economic growth centers in eastern Indonesia. With more than 27,000 MSMEs spread across various districts, the local government has launched various programs to encourage digital literacy and technology adoption. However, most MSMEs still rely on social media and instant messaging applications as their main promotional tools. Although relatively easy to use, these platforms have limitations in building long-term brand identity, managing customer data, and establishing professional business credibility.

Websites as digital promotional media offer more comprehensive advantages compared with third-party platforms. A website functions as an official digital identity that gives MSME actors full control over product information, brand narratives, and user experience. In addition to increasing consumer trust, websites also enable the implementation of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies that expand market reach organically and sustainably. However, the level of website adoption among local MSMEs remains relatively low. The main barriers include low digital literacy, limited capital, and the perception that websites are difficult to manage and do not provide immediate benefits for business. In fact, the development of content management system (CMS) platforms currently allows website management to become easier and more affordable. A lack of empirical understanding regarding the usefulness and ease of use of websites has further strengthened MSME hesitation to shift toward more professional digital promotional media.

Based on these conditions, the research gap lies in the limited number of empirical studies analyzing the effectiveness of websites as digital promotional media for local MSMEs, particularly in the context of Makassar City. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of website adoption on improving MSME performance and to identify the main barriers in the adoption process. The contribution of this research is expected to provide academic foundations and practical recommendations for MSME actors and policymakers in formulating more effective and sustainable digital transformation strategies.

### **Theoretical Framework: Digital Marketing and Technology Adoption**

#### **The Evolution of Marketing 4.0 in the MSME Context**

The marketing landscape has undergone a fundamental evolution from the product-based marketing era, known as Marketing 1.0, to the human value-based marketing era, known as Marketing 3.0. Currently, the business world has entered the Marketing 4.0 era, a concept popularized by Philip Kotler that emphasizes the convergence between traditional and digital marketing. In this era, interactions between companies and consumers are no longer one-way, but have developed into collaborative and transparent dialogues. For MSMEs, Marketing 4.0 provides opportunities to compete with larger companies because digital

technology has significantly reduced market entry barriers and brand promotion costs. One of the main pillars of Marketing 4.0 is the shift from the traditional 4P marketing mix, namely Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, to the digital 4C marketing mix, namely Co-creation, Currency, Communal Activation, and Conversation. A website is a highly relevant platform for implementing these 4C elements. For example, through a website, MSMEs can conduct co-creation by involving customers in product development through review features or customization forms. Flexible pricing or currency can be managed through dynamic pricing systems on websites, while customer communities can be activated through forum or blog integration. Finally, conversation between brands and consumers can be managed more professionally through live chat features or social media integration within the website. In the digital economy, the consumer journey no longer follows the linear AIDA pattern, namely Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action, but follows the 5A pattern: Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, and Advocate. This path reflects highly socially connected consumer behavior and the tendency to conduct research before making purchasing decisions. Websites play a crucial role at each stage of this 5A path, especially at the Ask and Act stages.

**Table 1.** The 5A Path Pattern

<b>5A Stage</b>	<b>Description of Consumer Behavior</b>	<b>Website Support Mechanism</b>
<b>Aware</b>	Consumers become aware of the brand through advertisements or recommendations.	SEO optimization on the website increases visibility in search engines.
<b>Appeal</b>	Consumers begin to be attracted to the messages conveyed by the brand.	Attractive visual design and clear value propositions on the homepage.
<b>Ask</b>	Consumers search for deeper information and compare reviews.	Complete catalogs, detailed product descriptions, and testimonial pages.
<b>Act</b>	Consumers decide to purchase or use a service.	Shopping cart features and secure electronic payment integration.
<b>Advocate</b>	Consumers provide positive testimonials and recommend the brand.	Ease of sharing content to social media and automatic collection of review data.

The existence of a website strengthens the Advocate stage because it provides credible social proof. Unlike reviews on social media, which can easily be buried under other content, reviews on websites can be categorized and displayed permanently to convince potential customers in the future.

### **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is the most widely used framework to explain how users accept and adopt new technology. In the MSME context, website adoption is influenced by two main variables: Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use. Perceived Usefulness relates to the extent to which MSME actors believe that a website will improve their business performance, expand market reach, and increase operational efficiency. Meanwhile, Perceived Ease of Use refers to the belief that a website can be managed without significant technical difficulties.

Conceptually, the relationship between perception, attitude, intention, and usage behavior in TAM shows that successful website adoption is the result of a gradual process, not an instant decision. Websites designed by considering MSME resource limitations are more likely to be accepted and integrated into daily business activities. Therefore, TAM strengthens the argument that MSME digitalization is not merely a technological issue, but

also a matter of system design, user education, and sustainable ecosystem support.

Practically, the TAM equation that connects perception, attitude, intention, and usage behavior can be translated into policy priorities: the easier a website is to access and operate through a simple interface, clear guidance, and technical support, the more likely MSME actors are to perceive its real benefits and be encouraged to adopt it sustainably. This means that assistance programs, training, and website development services for MSMEs should ideally begin by strengthening these two perception aspects, not merely focusing on the technical side of system development.

TAM mathematically explains the causal relationship between external factors and system usage behavior through user attitudes and intentions. The following is a representation of this relationship:

$$\begin{aligned} B &= W_1A + W_2U \\ A &= W_3U + W_4E \\ U &= W_5E \end{aligned}$$

Where:

**B:** Actual system usage or actual website usage behavior.

**A:** Behavioral intention or the intention to continue using the website.

**U:** Perceived usefulness or perception of the benefits of the website for business.

**E:** Perceived ease of use or perception of the ease of managing the website.

The implication of this theory for local MSMEs is that website development service providers or government assistance programs must focus on improving ease of access and explaining real economic benefits. If MSME actors perceive websites as easy and useful, the level of digital adoption will increase.

### **Resource-Based View (RBV) and Competitive Advantage**

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory states that companies can achieve sustainable competitive advantage if they possess resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and effectively organized, known as VRIO: valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized. In the MSME context, a website does not only function as a promotional medium, but can also be positioned as a strategic digital asset that meets the characteristics of VRIO.

Based on the literature synthesis, website ownership enables MSMEs to independently manage customer first-party data, which cannot be obtained when they depend entirely on third-party marketplaces. These data have strategic value for understanding consumer behavior and supporting the development of personalized marketing strategies. In addition, digital literacy plays a role as a dynamic capability that enables MSME actors to continuously optimize their digital assets in response to changing market trends, such as mastering video-based content and the latest SEO techniques.

Thus, the combination of websites as fixed assets and digital literacy as a dynamic capability forms a conceptual framework that strengthens MSME competitiveness in a competitive digital market environment.

### **METHODS**

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach with a descriptive qualitative orientation to analyze MSME digital transformation in Indonesia during the 2020–2025 period. This method aims to systematically synthesize conceptual and empirical findings from previous studies, particularly those related to the use of websites as promotional media for MSMEs.

The SLR process was carried out through the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of relevant scientific articles, with the main sources derived from reputable national and international journals. Data analysis was conducted thematically and

narratively using the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework to classify internal and external factors influencing the success of digital platform adoption by MSMEs.

The quantitative data presented in this study were not analyzed as primary data, but were treated as descriptive secondary data taken from previous studies. Indicators such as sales volume, brand awareness, and audience reach were used to strengthen conceptual interpretation without conducting inferential statistical tests such as correlation or regression. Therefore, this study does not aim to produce statistical generalization, but rather to construct a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the role of websites as strategic MSME assets based on literature synthesis. The validity of the findings was maintained through thematic consistency and cross-study comparison of relevant literature.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital transformation in the Indonesian MSME sector still faces major challenges, particularly regarding human resource readiness. Although internet penetration in Indonesia continues to increase, the capacity to utilize technology for productive purposes remains largely at a basic level. Based on previous research findings, approximately 37 percent of MSMEs only have basic online capacity, such as computer use and broadband access, while only 9 percent have reached an advanced category through the professional use of websites and e-commerce. This condition indicates that increased internet access has not been fully accompanied by adequate digital literacy and skills improvement.

In Makassar City, efforts to improve digital literacy have been carried out through cooperation between BBPSDMP Komdigi Makassar and the Department of Cooperatives and SMEs. However, based on 2023 data referred to in previous studies, there is still a significant gap between the total number of MSMEs and the number of MSMEs reached by digital incubation programs. This indicates the need to accelerate digital assistance programs in a more massive and sustainable manner.

**Table 2.** Comparison of MSME Digital Literacy

Region/Indicator	Number of Registered MSMEs	Digital Literacy Percentage	Main Digital Platform
Makassar City	27,527	<15% estimated incubation	WhatsApp and social media
Tangerang Regency	Limited sample	18% medium capacity	Website and e-commerce
National Indonesia	±64 million	9% advanced capacity	Social media and WhatsApp

The data show that although the number of MSMEs in Indonesia is very large, the effective use of more advanced digital platforms, such as websites, remains relatively low. Many MSME actors still consider social media sufficient to support sales activities. In fact, full dependence on social media carries risks, particularly due to algorithm changes, limited data control, and low independent ownership of digital assets.

### Website Effectiveness in Increasing Brand Awareness

One indicator of successful website utilization is the improvement of a brand's position in the brand awareness pyramid. A case study of the local beverage MSME "IdRink" shows that the integration of a WordPress-based website with structured Instagram content management was able to improve the brand's position from the unaware-of-brand stage to brand recognition and brand recall within a relatively short period.

**Table 3.** Changes in Brand Awareness Metrics After Digitalization

Brand Awareness Metric	Before Digitalization	After Digitalization	Increase
Brand recognition	20%	74%	270%
Brand recall	15%	79%	426%
Top of mind	<5%	12%	>100%

The increase in brand recognition by 270 percent shows that a website with consistent visual identity and complete product information can help consumers recognize a brand more easily. In addition, the increase in brand recall to 79 percent indicates that websites are able to build stronger brand memory in consumers' minds. Therefore, websites play a role as the main touchpoint that provides information authority, while social media functions as a driver of initial attention and interaction with consumers.

### The Influence of Websites on Sales and Business Development

The use of websites also has a positive relationship with business development. Previous research in Tangerang Regency showed a strong positive correlation between website use and SME development, with a Pearson correlation value of  $r = 0.65$  and significance of  $p < 0.01$ . These results indicate that the more intensive the use of websites, the greater the opportunity for business development experienced by SMEs.

Several factors contribute to business development through websites, including content update frequency, content quality, and customer interaction. Websites that are regularly updated with product information, promotions, or educational articles tend to attract more visits and increase consumer trust. In addition, content quality in the form of good product photos and clear descriptions can increase the effectiveness of converting visitors into buyers. Interaction features, such as contact forms or direct messaging services, can also strengthen customer relationships and increase loyalty.

Regression models in previous studies show that website use can explain 40 percent of the variation in SME development. This confirms that digitalization through websites is one important factor in business development, in addition to capital, internal management, and human resource quality. The effectiveness of website promotion can also be analyzed using the AIDA model, namely attention, interest, desire, and action. Although the dimensions of attention, interest, and desire are in good categories, the action dimension still requires optimization, particularly through the addition of easier and more integrated transaction features.

### Comparison of Social Media and Website Effectiveness

Social media has indeed become a popular platform for MSMEs because it is easy to use, inexpensive, and able to reach consumers quickly. However, websites have a different and more strategic role in the digital promotion ecosystem. Websites allow MSMEs to have greater control over data, information structure, business credibility, and search engine optimization.

**Table 4.** Comparison of Social Media and Websites

Feature/Characteristic	Social Media	Website
Data control	Limited to platform policies	Greater control because it is self-managed
Credibility	Adequate, but vulnerable to fake accounts	Higher and reflects professionalism
Information structure	Based on chronology or upload time	More structured through catalogs and categories
SEO	Relatively difficult to find through Google search	Easier to optimize through SEO

Feature/Characteristic	Social Media	Website
Operational cost	Free to low cost	Requires domain and hosting costs
Interaction	Fast and personal	More organized and formal

The integration between social media and websites is an ideal strategy for MSMEs. Social media can be used to quickly reach audiences through visual content and direct interaction, while websites can be used to provide more complete information, build brand credibility, manage product catalogs, and process transactions more systematically.

### Barriers and Challenges of MSME Digital Transformation

The implementation of websites among local MSMEs is inseparable from multidimensional obstacles. The main challenges include technological, organizational, financial, psychological, and policy aspects. From the technological aspect, limitations in internet network quality, inadequate devices, and low technical understanding cause many MSME websites to stop only at the creation stage without being optimally utilized.

From the organizational aspect, many MSMEs do not yet have a specific structure or person responsible for digital marketing. As a result, website management is often carried out as a side task, content updates are inconsistent, and visitor data are not analyzed. From the environmental side, regulatory support, local culture, communities, associations, and business incubators also strongly determine the sustainability of website adoption as part of a long-term business strategy.

**Table 5.** Barriers to MSME Digital Transformation and Strategic Solutions

Barrier Category	Problem Details	Strategic Solutions
Internal/Human Resources	Low skills in data analysis and content management	Intensive digital literacy training and collaboration with students
Technology	Uneven internet infrastructure	Expansion of internet access and facilitation of public Wi-Fi
Financial	Limited licensing and maintenance costs	Utilization of open-source CMS and free platforms
Psychological	Resistance to changes in conventional work methods	Education on long-term economic benefits and success stories
Policy	Suboptimal local digital regulation support	Strengthening policies and local marketplace programs

In Makassar City, one specific obstacle is the declining interest of MSME actors in digital platforms when not accompanied by continuous mentoring. Experiences in several regions show that government digital platforms may experience declining usage if they are not supported by human resource readiness and an adequate ecosystem. This shows that a website is only a tool, while its success depends greatly on digital culture, management capability, and the sustainability of mentoring.

### Website Optimization Strategies for Local MSMEs

Website optimization for MSMEs can be carried out through several strategies. First, the implementation of Search Engine Optimization or SEO is very important so that websites are easily found by potential consumers through search engines. SEO includes technical, on-page, and off-page aspects. MSME websites need to be responsive on mobile devices, have good access speed, and contain content relevant to consumer needs.

Second, MSMEs need to implement content marketing and storytelling strategies. Websites can be used to publish articles, product catalogs, tutorial videos, production process stories, or narratives about local values attached to products. This strategy is important because

consumers do not only buy products, but also the values, stories, and experiences offered by the brand.

Third, MSMEs need to integrate websites with other digital channels through an omnichannel approach. Websites should be connected to social media, marketplaces, and instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp. For example, a “Buy via WhatsApp” button on a website can make it easier for consumers who are still comfortable conducting transactions through personal conversations. This integration enables MSMEs to reach consumers across various digital touchpoints, including Google, social media, and messaging applications.

### **Social Impact and the Future of MSME Digitalization**

Digital transformation through website utilization also provides broad social impacts. For women entrepreneurs, digitalization provides flexibility in managing businesses from home, thereby increasing household economic independence. At the local level, websites that promote local wisdom can strengthen regional identity and support the growth of community-based tourism.

In the future, MSME digital marketing is predicted to be increasingly influenced by the use of artificial intelligence for offer personalization and customer service automation through chatbots. MSMEs that already have independent websites will be better prepared to integrate this technology because they have a stronger data foundation. In addition, the development of peer-to-peer distribution and 3D printing technology also has the potential to change the way local products are produced, distributed, and marketed through websites.

Thus, websites do not only function as promotional media, but also as strategic digital assets for MSMEs. Optimal website utilization can increase credibility, expand market reach, strengthen brand awareness, and support MSME transformation toward a more sustainable digital business ecosystem.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, the use of websites as digital promotional media has been shown to play a strategic role in improving the competitiveness of local MSMEs in the digital era. A website does not only function as a product showcase, but also as a medium for building business credibility, strengthening brand identity, expanding market reach, and increasing the effectiveness of communication with consumers. The literature findings show that website use can increase brand awareness, particularly in the aspects of brand recognition and brand recall, and has a positive relationship with business development. The advantages of websites in terms of data control, professionalism, information structure, and search engine optimization make them more stable as long-term digital assets compared with full dependence on social media.

Nevertheless, the success of website adoption among MSMEs greatly depends on the readiness of digital literacy among business actors, internet infrastructure availability, financial support, and sustainable mentoring. Technical barriers, human resource limitations, and resistance to change remain the main challenges in the MSME digital transformation process. Therefore, support from government, academics, business communities, and technology providers is needed to help MSMEs develop websites through platforms that are easy to use, affordable, and aligned with business needs.

Theoretically, website utilization is in line with the Marketing 4.0 approach, particularly in supporting the customer journey from the aware stage to the advocate stage. A website can serve as an information center integrated with social media, marketplaces, and instant messaging applications through an omnichannel strategy. However, because this research is based on secondary literature analysis, the findings still require empirical testing through surveys or field studies on local MSMEs. By overcoming technical, financial, and digital literacy barriers, websites have the potential to become strategic assets for MSMEs in building a more inclusive and sustainable digital business ecosystem.

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