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## Digital Communication Strategy to Increase Visibility of Women's MSMEs: A Case Study of Padang City

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### Abstract

Women's participation in Indonesia's economy has long been a focus of attention. Notably, more than 60 percent of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) in Indonesia are managed by women. While numerous studies have examined how digitalization affects MSME performance in Padang City, there has been little to no research on effective communication strategies in the digital context. Therefore, this study aims to provide comprehensive and relevant insights to develop effective digital communication strategies that enhance the marketing performance of women-owned MSMEs in Padang City. The study includes an in-depth analysis of the types of digital platforms used, the messages conveyed, and the ways customer interactions are conducted via social media, websites, and e-commerce platforms. The research method involves collecting primary data through in-depth interviews and surveys, and secondary data on the profiles of women's MSMEs from 100 respondents. The data analysis employs multivariate regression to simultaneously assess the influence of multiple independent variables on multiple dependent variables. The results indicate that strategies employing social media and online advertising are highly effective in increasing MSMEs' visibility on social media platforms. Meanwhile, websites and online advertisements are more effective in driving visitors to the MSME websites.

**Keywords:** Customer loyalty; *Digital Communication*; *Multivariate Regression*; *Women-led MSMEs*; *Visibility*

## **Abstrak**

*Partisipasi Perempuan pada perekonomian Indonesia sudah menjadi perhatian. Bahkan diketahui lebih dari 60 persen UMKM Di Indonesia ternyata dikelola oleh Perempuan. Pada dasarnya banyak penelitian yang sudah meneliti bagaimana digitalisasi mampu mempengaruhi kinerja UMKM di Kota Padang, namun belum ada kajian spesifik mengenai cara berkomunikasi yang tepat di dunia digital. Sehingga penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan wawasan komprehensif dan relevan bagi pengembangan strategi komunikasi digital yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kinerja pemasaran UMKM perempuan di Kota Padang. Hal ini mencakup analisis mendalam terhadap jenis platform digital yang digunakan, pesan-pesan yang disampaikan, dan cara interaksi dengan pelanggan dilakukan melalui media sosial, situs web, atau platform e-commerce. Metode penelitian mencakup pengumpulan data primer melalui wawancara mendalam dan survei, serta data sekunder terkait profil UMKM perempuan sebanyak 100 responden. Analisis data akan menggunakan Analisis regresi Multivariat untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruh beberapa variabel independen terhadap lebih dari satu variabel dependen secara simultan. Hasil Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi penggunaan media sosial dan iklan online sangat efektif dalam meningkatkan visibilitas UMKM di media sosial, sementara penggunaan situs web dan iklan online lebih efektif dalam mendatangkan pengunjung ke situs web*

**Kata Kunci:** *Komunikasi Digital; Loyalitas Pelanggan; UMKM Perempuan; Visibilitas*

## A. Introduction

In the global economic landscape, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have become the backbone of sustainable economic growth in many countries, including Indonesia. MSMEs contribute more than 57 percent to Indonesia's GDP (Widia & Octafia, 2022). Notably, more than 60 percent of these MSMEs are managed by women (Widia & Octafia, 2023). These data highlight the significant potential for women to participate in the economy at both the family and national levels. Unfortunately, despite the dominant number of MSMEs, they remain highly vulnerable to economic changes and often face serious challenges (Widia & Octafia, 2021). These challenges primarily involve increasing their visibility and competitiveness in an increasingly complex and competitive market (Dubbelink et al., 2021).

One of the main challenges faced by women-led MSMEs is the limited access to and knowledge of digital technology for marketing and promoting their products (Lukonga, 2020). Many women entrepreneurs still rely on less effective conventional marketing methods, such as word-of-mouth promotions or local exhibitions. Additionally, significant challenges arise from limited digital literacy, information access disparities, and women's access to financial services (Roy & Manna, 2014). These factors result in limited market reach and hinder business growth potential. Furthermore, gender stereotypes and ingrained social norms often restrict women's participation in business and technology sectors (Prayudi et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a need for transformation and digitalization processes to enhance connectivity and communication between people, digital devices, and information and communication technology systems (Bolton et al., 2017). In this context, integrating digital technologies and communication is vital.

Digital technology and communication are closely linked in supporting MSME marketing advancements, particularly in the current digital transformation era. Digital technology provides MSMEs with access to platforms such as social media, marketplaces, mobile applications, and cloud services, thereby significantly expanding their market reach. For example, through social media, MSMEs can create engaging marketing content to attract new customers while retaining existing ones (Baruah, 2012). Additionally, marketplaces allow business actors to sell their products to a broader consumer base without needing physical stores, thereby reducing operational costs (Rustan, 2021).

On the other hand, digital communication is a crucial element in modern marketing strategies. By using communication technologies such as chatbots, email marketing, and instant messaging applications, MSMEs can enhance the effectiveness of customer interactions. This interactive two-way communication enhances customer loyalty and helps business owners receive direct consumer feedback, making them more responsive to market demands. For instance, prompt responses to customer inquiries or complaints via digital platforms can enhance

MSMEs' reputations and strengthen positive perceptions among customers (Setianti et al., 2024).

The combination of digital technology and communication also enables MSMEs to implement data-driven marketing strategies (Aulia et al., 2024). Entrepreneurs can use digital analytics tools to analyze consumer data, including preferences, shopping habits, and demographics, to design more personalized and relevant marketing campaigns. This data-driven strategy has been proven to increase conversion rates and maximize marketing cost efficiency. Moreover, digital technology allows MSMEs to perform more accurate market segmentation, ensuring targeted and effective communication to attract consumer interest (Mulyana & Muhammad Irfan, 2024).

Overall, integrating digital technology and communication offers significant opportunities for MSMEs to enhance their competitiveness. By optimally leveraging technology and communication, MSMEs can overcome various challenges in traditional marketing, including resource constraints and limited market reach. Therefore, MSME actors must continuously improve their digital literacy and communication skills to compete in an increasingly competitive market. Research supports that adopting digitalization and effective communication strategies can be key to MSME success in this digital era (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Digital communication strategies are essential for enhancing the visibility and competitiveness of women-led MSMEs. Visibility refers to the extent to which women-led MSMEs are exposed to the market or the general public. In other words, visibility in this context refers to the ability to be more readily recognized and accessed by potential consumers, thereby supporting the growth and competitiveness of women-led MSMEs. Several digital communication strategies that can be implemented include utilizing social media to build brand awareness, creating attractive and relevant marketing content (content marketing), employing search engine optimization (SEO) to improve visibility in search engines, and collaborating with local influencers to expand market reach (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Through effective digital communication strategies, women-led MSMEs can increase their visibility and presence on online platforms, including websites, social media, and online marketplaces. Growth opportunities are even greater, as data shows that internet users in Indonesia reached 204.7 million in 2022 (Zahiroh, 2022).

The role of digital communication is vital because it provides a profound touch in the technological domain (Mukherji & Arora, 2017). Entrepreneurs can leverage opportunities in digital technology to create new forms of communication, thereby increasing interest in purchasing products and in the offers presented (Preston et al., 2009). This communication strategy concerns marketing actions that influence consumer interest in a product or service (Fianto & Andrianto, 2022). Before the emergence of digital communication, the relationship between sellers and buyers could be divided into personal communication, such as face-to-face interactions, and

impersonal communication through advertising and publicity (Lacarcel & Huete, 2023). The development of new technologies has blurred the boundaries of communication, with the emergence of methods such as video conferencing, chat, social media, and other digital communication tools (Bordi et al., 2018).

One crucial aspect of digital communication is its ability to support real-time interactions (Dubbelink et al., 2021). The speed of response provided by digital communication tools allows entrepreneurs to address customer inquiries, handle complaints, and adapt quickly to market dynamics. This responsiveness from digital communication contributes to increased customer satisfaction and retention (Chaffey & Smith, 2019). Additionally, personalized communication via digital platforms enables entrepreneurs to tailor messages to customer preferences, thereby increasing the relevance and impact of marketing campaigns. Personalization is crucial in the digital era, in which consumers expect brands to understand their needs and provide appropriate solutions.

Another essential dimension of digital communication is its role in enhancing brand visibility. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have become important marketing tools, enabling entrepreneurs to create and share engaging content for their target audiences. Studies show that attractive and relevant visual content shared through social media significantly increases customer engagement and brand awareness. (Priyowidodo et al., 2021). Furthermore, digital communication supports viral marketing, in which engaging messages or campaigns can spread rapidly and exponentially expand reach at relatively low additional cost.

However, the effectiveness of digital communication in marketing strategies largely depends on the specific strategy employed. Business owners must choose platforms and communication styles that align with their target markets. For example, younger audiences may prefer platforms such as TikTok or Instagram, whereas professional audiences may respond better to LinkedIn. Additionally, communication content must reflect the brand identity while addressing the target market's unique needs. Therefore, MSMEs must recognize the importance of integrating digital communication into broader marketing strategies to maximize their impact (Dubbelink et al., 2021).

This research will explore the potential of women-led MSMEs in the local economy, specifically in Padang City, West Sumatra. MSMEs have become one of the main focuses in economic development in Padang City. According to data from BPS West Sumatra, the number of MSMEs in this region reached 580,344, with the highest concentration in Padang City at 89,699, increasing to 100,712 in 2020. Previous studies have highlighted issues related to technology, digital marketing, and the social capital required by women-led MSMEs in Padang City (Widia & Octafia, 2021, 2022, 2023). In addition, research on the relationship between digital communication and various aspects provides a relatively broad picture. Previous research shows that implementing digital communication has a significant positive

impact on improving organizational performance (Putro, 2023). The combination of informative, persuasive, and educational communication, along with repeated delivery, has been shown to elicit positive responses from target consumers (Deborah et al., 2021). Furthermore, other studies have found that live streaming is more authentic to consumers than recorded videos because it provides an interactive, real-time experience that increases trust and subscription intentions (Hossain et al., 2023).

This research will address three key issues. First, the main barriers women-led MSMEs face in adopting and implementing digital communication strategies to enhance product visibility. Second, how the level of knowledge, skills, and access to digital technology affects women-led MSMEs' ability to utilize digital platforms to expand market reach. Lastly, the impact of implementing the right digital communication strategy on improving visibility, sales, and business growth for women-led MSMEs.

## **B. Methods**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected through in-depth interviews with women-owned MSME operators in Padang City. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling, targeting women-owned MSMEs that actively use online marketing platforms and are registered in the 2024 database of the Office of Cooperatives and MSMEs (Dinas Koperasi dan UKM). From this dataset, a targeted selection was conducted to identify women-owned MSMEs that have actively used online marketing platforms to operate their businesses. The interviews will focus on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the digital communication strategies they employ, the challenges they face in implementing these strategies, and the impact of these strategies on their business visibility. Additionally, surveys will be conducted with women-owned MSMEs in Padang City to gather broader insights into their digital communication practices. Secondary data will include information related to the profiles of women-owned MSMEs in Padang City, local industry trends, and relevant market data.

One hundred respondents will be selected, specifically women-led MSME units that actively use social media to support their business activities. This study does not classify respondents by individual social media platforms. Most women entrepreneurs use multiple platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, to enhance their business visibility and customer engagement. Therefore, the focus is on women-led MSMEs that maintain at least one active social media account for business purposes, regardless of the number or types of platforms used. The unit of coding will be posts on social media profiles (images, videos, text, or combinations of these elements) or content on websites (images, videos, text, or combinations of these elements). For the quantitative analysis, multivariate regression will be used to assess the influence of various digital communication strategies on two aspects of the visibility of women-owned MSMEs in Padang City: visibility on social media and website traffic. This technique is chosen because it



enables the simultaneous identification of the influence of multiple independent variables on multiple dependent variables.

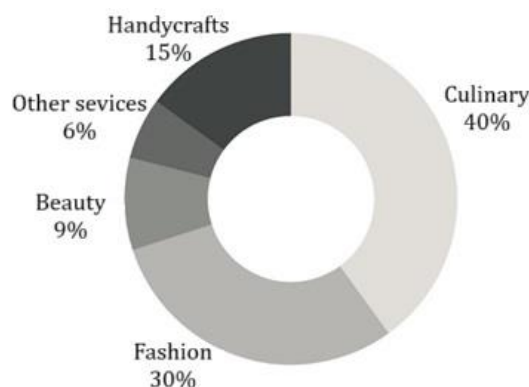
The independent variables in this study include social media, online advertising, email marketing, and website utilization. The dependent variables are (1) social media visibility, measured by the number of followers and engagement rates, and (2) website visitor numbers, assessed based on visits and conversion rates. The multivariate regression analysis will involve developing two regression models: the first evaluates the impact of digital communication strategies on social media visibility, and the second assesses their effect on website visitor numbers. For each model, the regression coefficients and significance values for each independent variable will be analyzed to determine the magnitude of their impact. Interpretation will focus on identifying which independent variables significantly influence each dependent variable.

### C. Results and Discussion

#### Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 100 female MSME owners in Padang City. Most sampled MSMEs operate in the culinary sector (40%), followed by the fashion (30%) and handicraft (15%) sectors. At the same time, the remaining businesses are spread across other sectors such as beauty and services. The dominance of the culinary industry reflects a broader trend in Indonesia, in which food and beverage businesses are generally easier to establish and exhibit stable market demand. Additionally, culinary companies offer operational flexibility, allowing women to run their businesses while managing family responsibilities. By business age, 60% of these MSMEs have been operating for more than 5 years, 25% for 3–5 years, and 15% for less than 3 years.

Figure 1. Business Sectors Managed by Women-Owned MSMEs in Padang City

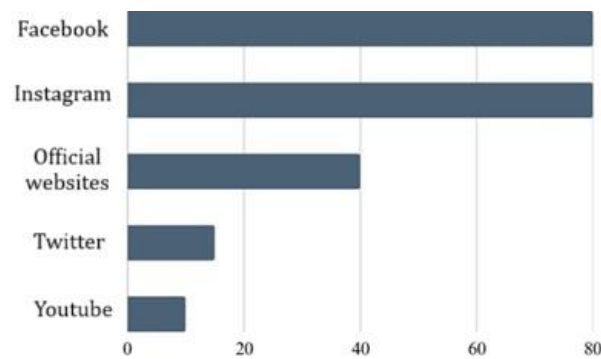


Source: Research Results, 2025

Regarding the use of digital communication platforms, 95% of women-owned MSMEs use Facebook as their primary channel for consumer interaction. This indicates that Facebook remains the dominant platform among MSMEs, likely due to its broad reach and ease of use for community-building and promotional activities. Additionally, 90% of these MSMEs are active on Instagram, indicating that product visualization is a key strategy for attracting consumer attention,

particularly among younger audiences, who tend to be more responsive to visual content.

Figure 2. Digital Communication Platforms Used by Women-Owned MSMEs in Padang City



Source: Research Results, 2025

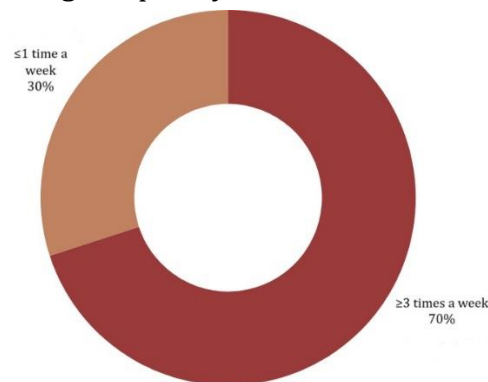
Although most MSMEs utilize social media platforms, only 40% have an official website. This indicates a heavy reliance on third-party social media platforms, which can make it difficult to maintain complete control over brand image and consumer data. Twitter is used by only 15% of MSMEs, suggesting that this platform is less prevalent, possibly because it is better suited to brief discussions and rapid news updates rather than product promotion. For video-based marketing, YouTube is used by just 10% of MSMEs. This shows that video content for visual marketing has not been optimally utilized, despite global trends indicating rising video content consumption among digital consumers.

Regarding interaction frequency, 70% of MSMEs regularly upload content on social media at least three times a week, reflecting their commitment to maintaining an online presence and engaging with consumers. Conversely, the remaining 30% post content sporadically, at least once per week. This inconsistent posting frequency can negatively affect social media visibility and engagement, as platform algorithms tend to prioritize consistently active accounts.

In-depth interviews found that most women-owned MSME owners report that using social media, particularly Instagram and Facebook, significantly increases their product visibility. However, they also acknowledge challenges, including limited time to manage social media and a lack of understanding of advanced digital marketing strategies, such as paid advertising and search engine optimization (SEO).



Figure 3. Social Media Posting Frequency of Women-Owned MSMEs in Padang City



Source: Research Results, 2025

### Padang City Women-Owned MSMEs' Proficiency in Developing Digital Content

This study reveals the distribution of digital content development skills among women-owned Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Padang City, categorized into three proficiency levels: high, medium, and low. Approximately 20% of respondents fall into the high proficiency category, demonstrating strong capabilities in producing high-quality digital content. They are adept at using design applications such as Canva and video-editing tools to create engaging visual content. MSMEs in this category also implement well-planned digital communication strategies, including upload schedules, audience analysis, and the use of digital trends, thereby enabling them to reach consumers more effectively. Experience, solid digital literacy, and access to advanced technology often support this success.

About 50% of respondents, forming the largest group, are at a medium proficiency level. They understand the basics of using digital media but mainly produce simple content uploads, such as product photos, without innovative visual enhancements. MSME owners in this category typically lack structured, consistent strategies, although they recognize the importance of a digital presence. This group has significant potential for growth with further guidance and training, particularly in leveraging advanced features such as social media analytics and paid digital marketing.

However, 30% of respondents fall into the low-proficiency category, indicating limited proficiency with digital platforms. Their content tends to be basic and less engaging, with a primary focus on traditional marketing. The main factors contributing to this low proficiency are limited digital literacy, inadequate access to technology, and limited participation in relevant training. This group requires special attention to improve their foundational understanding of digital communication and access to supporting devices.

Overall, the distribution of digital proficiency among women-owned MSMEs in Padang City highlights a significant skill gap between high-and low-proficiency groups. Most respondents are at the medium level, indicating substantial potential for further development through digital literacy training, technological support, and more targeted digital communication strategies. This study emphasizes the

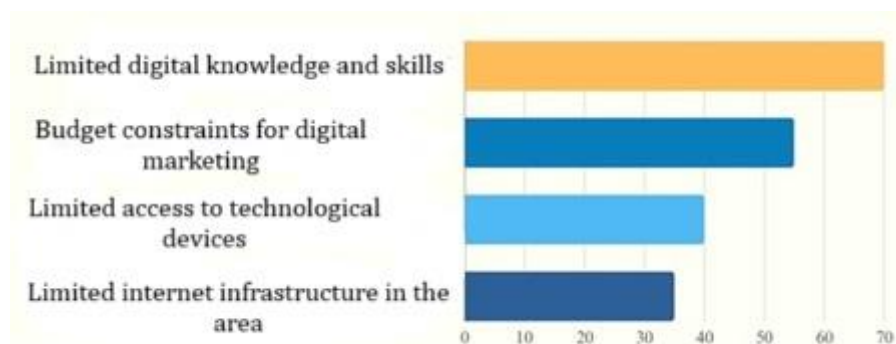
importance of strategic interventions to help women-owned MSMEs maximize the potential of digital media in effectively marketing their products.

Moreover, this proficiency gap is not merely a technical issue but reflects deeper structural challenges. Digital transformation does not automatically enhance MSMEs' performance; instead, its effect is mediated by innovation capacity and competitive advantage (Susanti et al., 2023). In their study, women-owned MSMEs that successfully integrated digital strategies into their operations tended to have stronger innovation capabilities and were better positioned to develop differentiated marketing content. This suggests high proficiency in digital content creation, including mastery of tools such as Canva and strategic content scheduling. That is not merely a skill but a competitive asset that enhances market visibility and business sustainability.

### Main Barriers Faced by Women-Owned MSMEs in Adopting and Implementing Digital Communication Strategies

Many women-owned MSMEs face various obstacles in implementing digital communication strategies. One of the main challenges is the lack of knowledge and skills in digital marketing. For example, in a survey of 100 women-owned MSMEs, approximately 70% reported difficulties using platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Most of these business owners are more familiar with traditional marketing. They are uncertain about how to optimize digital features, such as paid promotions and social media analytics, to expand their market reach. This condition is in line with research findings, which state that most female MSME actors are still trapped in informal digital practices due to minimal access to training, low digital literacy, and minimal support for technological infrastructure (Ramdlaningrum et al., 2022).

Figure 4. Analysis of Barriers Faced by Women-Owned MSMEs in Padang City



Source: Research Results, 2025

In addition, budget constraints are a significant obstacle. Based on sample data from the same survey, 55% of women-owned MSMEs reported that their digital advertising budgets are too high relative to their financial capacity. While they

recognize that paid advertising can increase visibility, budget constraints prevent them from using this option consistently. Spending on digital advertising or promotional content is often perceived as an additional burden, particularly for newly established MSMEs that are still focused on managing operational costs.

Access to technology and digital infrastructure is also a challenge. Approximately 40% of women-owned MSMEs surveyed reported lacking adequate devices, such as computers or smartphones with appropriate specifications, to manage content or data effectively. Additionally, those in areas with limited or expensive internet access face difficulties running digital campaigns that require fast, consistent access.

In addition to technical and financial constraints, some women MSME owners face barriers regarding work culture and mindset. For example, most feel more comfortable with word-of-mouth marketing or other traditional methods. According to the survey, only 25% of MSMEs believe that digital marketing is effective for small businesses. This underscores the need to raise awareness of the long-term benefits of digital marketing in enhancing the visibility of their products.

### Results of Multivariate Regression Analysis

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates that the response variables are interrelated, thereby permitting multivariate regression analysis in this study. Similarly, the multicollinearity test showed no issues, as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below 10. The multivariate regression analysis revealed that variables in the digital communication strategy have different effects on the two main dependent variables: social media visibility and the number of website visitors among women-owned MSMEs in Padang City. In the first model, which measures social media visibility, social media usage had a significant influence ( $p < 0.05$ ), with a coefficient of 0.45. This shows that the higher the use of social media by MSMEs, whether through posting frequency, engaging content, or interaction with the audience, the greater the visibility of their business on social media platforms.

Table 1. Multivariate Regression Test Results

Variable	Social Media Visibility (Y1) (Coef, sig.)	Number of web visitors (Y2) (Coef, Sig.)
Use of social media (X1)	0,45 0.0125*	1.85 0.892
Online advertising (X2)	0,30 0.005*	0.35 0.000*
Use of the website (X3)	0.98 0.7891	0.5 0.0002*
Email marketing (X4)	1,34 0.6710	0,24 0.3401

Additionally, online advertising also significantly impacts social media visibility, with a coefficient of 0.30 and a p-value  $< 0.05$ . This indicates that paid advertisements or sponsored campaigns on digital platforms can expand audience reach and increase followers or engagement. On the other hand, the use of websites and email marketing does not significantly affect social media visibility ( $p > 0.05$ ), which may be due to their focus on different channels or the need for a more personalized effort compared to social media strategies and advertising.

In the second model, which measures website visitor numbers, the analysis shows that website usage has a significant impact with a coefficient of 0.50 and a p-value  $< 0.01$ . This means that website optimization, including attractive design, easy navigation, and relevant content, has a strong positive relationship with the number of site visitors. Additionally, online advertising has a significant influence on website traffic, with a coefficient of 0.35 and a p-value  $< 0.05$ , indicating that paid digital promotions enhance social media visibility and effectively drive users to visit MSME websites. Meanwhile, the use of social media and email marketing did not show a significant effect on website visitor numbers ( $p > 0.05$ ). This could be due to audience preferences or habits, whereby users may prefer direct interaction on social platforms or be less responsive to email marketing from MSMEs.

Overall, the multivariate regression results indicate that social media and online advertising strategies are highly effective in increasing the visibility of women-owned MSMEs on social media platforms. Meanwhile, websites and online advertising are more effective in generating website traffic. These findings highlight the importance of women entrepreneurs in Padang City actively utilizing social media and implementing digital advertising campaigns to enhance their digital presence. The effectiveness of these strategies aligns closely with the framework of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which emphasizes the importance of coordinating multiple communication channels to build brand equity and reach target audiences efficiently (Belch & Belch, 2003). In the digital era, this approach has evolved into Digital Integrated Marketing Communication, where message consistency, cross-platform integration, and interactive engagement with consumers are critical success factors (Chaffey & Smith, 2017).

These findings reinforce the theoretical premise of IMC, suggesting that well-coordinated digital platforms (such as social media, digital advertising, and websites) can significantly enhance enterprises' visibility and outreach, particularly for those constrained by limited resources. Furthermore, this strategy can also be understood through the lens of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Belch & Belch, 2003). The adoption of digital communication technologies by women-led MSMEs represents an innovation that accelerates information dissemination and market expansion. The effectiveness of such adoption largely depends on the entrepreneurs' absorptive capacity, including digital literacy and understanding of communication tools (Heredia et al., 2022).

#### D. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the importance of digital communication strategies for women-owned MSMEs in Padang City to enhance their business visibility and competitiveness. The results of the analysis show that social media and online advertising play a significant role in expanding market reach and increasing consumer engagement. Using social media with engaging content and a consistent posting frequency increases visibility, whereas online advertising effectively drives traffic to MSME websites. However, significant challenges remain, particularly regarding budget constraints, digital literacy, and access to technological infrastructure.

Therefore, greater attention is needed for digitalization training and financial assistance for women-owned MSMEs to optimize their digital communication strategies. The government and relevant stakeholders are expected to support these digitalization efforts so that women entrepreneurs can fully leverage technology and adapt to market changes. Such support is anticipated to help women-owned MSMEs in Padang City improve their visibility and strengthen their position in the increasingly competitive digital economy.

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