

Optimizing Omnichannel Strategies for MSME-Scale F&B Businesses in Makassar

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to optimize omnichannel marketing strategies for MSME-scale F&B businesses in Makassar, with a focus on the implementation of sales and marketing channels (both offline and online), eliminating challenges and opportunities in omnichannel integration, and formulating effective optimization strategies to improve customer experience and business performance. The results of the study indicate that omnichannel strategies are able to increase customer interaction, operational efficiency, and sales conversion, as well as build connections and engagement with target audiences. Key factors contributing to the success of this strategy include the use of social media, big data, artificial intelligence (AI), and effective integration systems. However, omnichannel implementation faces challenges such as the complexity of technology integration and the need for large investments. This study concludes that the quality of omnichannel strategies can provide a competitive advantage in the digital market and increase customer loyalty through consistent and satisfying experiences.

1. Introduction

Indonesia has the largest Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector in the ASEAN region, totaling approximately 65.46 million in 2021. These MSMEs contribute significantly to the country's economy, accounting for 97% of the total workforce, 60.3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 14.4% of national exports. The Indonesian government is actively promoting the digital transformation of MSMEs, targeting 30 million digital MSMEs by the end of 2023. In an increasingly competitive business landscape, customer experience has become a crucial element for a company's success. Modern consumers interact with brands through multiple touchpoints such as physical stores, e-commerce, mobile apps, and social media. Therefore, consistent customer satisfaction across all touchpoints is crucial.

Omnichannel marketing has emerged as a strategic approach to unifying various marketing channels, both online and offline, to provide a seamless and consistent experience to customers. This concept differs from multi-channel marketing, which manages each channel separately, as omnichannel focuses on the integration and synergy between channels to create a seamless customer journey. Omnichannel implementation faces challenges, especially for MSMEs that may have limited resources and technological capabilities. Other challenges include the complexity of system integration, the need for significant technology investment, interdepartmental coordination, and maintaining consistent service quality across all channels. Based on this urgency, this study is relevant to understanding how F&B MSMEs in Makassar can optimize their omnichannel strategies to improve customer experience and business performance.

Omnichannel has demonstrated various benefits for companies, including increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, sales growth, and operational efficiency. In Indonesia, major brands such as Gojek, Tokopedia, and Bukalapak have successfully adopted omnichannel marketing by integrating technological innovation and customer experience to create integrated services. Their success confirms that an omnichannel strategy can be a key driver of digital market growth in Indonesia. However, implementing this strategy also faces challenges, especially for MSMEs that may have limited resources and technological capabilities. Other challenges include the complexity of system integration, the need for significant technology investment, interdepartmental coordination, and maintaining consistent service quality across all channels.

Based on the urgency of optimizing an omnichannel strategy and the challenges faced by F&B MSMEs in Makassar, this research is relevant. This study aims to understand how F&B MSMEs in Makassar currently implement various sales and marketing channels, identify challenges and opportunities in integrating their omnichannel channels, and develop effective omnichannel optimization strategies to improve customer experience and business performance. This research is expected to provide insights and practical recommendations for F&B MSMEs in Makassar in leveraging the full potential of omnichannel strategies for their business aspirations and growth.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Marketing Management

Marketing is a human activity used to measure consumer needs and preferences through mechanisms based on the interests of business owners who own shares in the company (Yulianti et al., 2019). On the other hand, strategy is an inter-company partnership between the company and its environment (Rachmad et al., 2022). Marketing strategy is a systematic, comprehensive, and integrated method of promotional efforts to provide information on activities that must be undertaken to achieve the goals of a business. (Agustin & Isyanto, 2024)

2.2 Understanding Omnichannel

Omnichannel is a series of activities that enable sellers to sell their products through several different channels (Michael Levy, Weitz, and Ajay 2009). Omnichannel, using the click-and-mortar concept, describes the consumer experience of shopping at a physical store, where the sales process can be conducted both offline and online. The click-and-mortar concept is a form of retail sales that is enhanced through online sales, in this case e-commerce is used in convergence with conventional retail to increase the value of the consumer shopping experience (Otto & Chung, 2000).

2.3 Omnichannel Marketing

Omnichannel marketing is an approach that integrates various marketing channels, both online and offline, to provide a seamless and consistent customer experience (Kotler et al., 2021). Unlike multichannel marketing, which manages each channel separately, omnichannel marketing focuses on the integration and synergy between channels to create a seamless customer journey (Neslin et al., 2006).

2.4 Integration Of Online and Offline Channels

The integration of online and offline channels is at the heart of an omnichannel strategy. According to Brynjolfsson et al. (2013), this integration allows customers to start the shopping

process in one channel and complete it in another seamlessly. For example, customers can select a product online and pick it up in a physical store, or vice versa. This integration not only enhances customer convenience but also improves a company's operational efficiency (Hossain et al., 2019). However, this integration requires significant investment in technology and human resources, as well as strong coordination between departments (Beck & Rygl, 2015).

2.5 Consumer Experience of Omnichannel

Several previous studies have explored consumer perceptions and motivations for engaging in omnichannel purchasing. Hedonic motivations, pleasure, and enjoyment associated with using a particular technology, impact consumer acceptance and motivation to shop through omnichannel channels (Juaneda-Ayensa, Mosquera, & Sierra Murillo, 2016).

3. Methodology

Desain penelitian eksploratif menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif sesuai untuk mendapatkan pemahaman mendalam tentang suatu masalah atau fenomena yang belum dipelajari atau dieksplorasi secara menyeluruh di masa lalu. Penelitian semacam ini bersifat interaktif, terbuka, fleksibel untuk menjawab pertanyaan seperti apa, mengapa dan bagaimana (Bryman, 2012; Stebbins, 2001). Penelitian kualitatif yang efektif mengarah pada proses pembangunan teori melalui ekstraksi konstruk/faktor, proposisi, dan kerangka teoritis yang tepat (Creswell, 2013; Kathleen, 1989; Stebbins, 2001) dalam (Ali, 2022)

2.6 Omnichannel Implementation Challenges

Moving from a multichannel approach to an omnichannel approach that integrates all channels involves operational changes. Once multichannel capabilities are in place, retailers can make strategic operational decisions to lead their business toward omnichannel adoption. Omnichannel retailing has the opportunity to leverage best practices from both click-and-mortar and e-commerce (Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Rahman, 2013). In omnichannel, traditional operations must be integrated with promotions, transaction management, product and pricing information management, information access, order fulfillment, and customer service (McCormick et al., 2014).

Integrating online and offline channels can have negative impacts for retailers, with channel integration sometimes improving performance and sometimes hurting sales performance (Herhausen, Binder, Schoegel, & Herrmann, 2015). Some experts argue about the challenges of interconnectedness and interplay between channels (Avery, Steenburgh, Deighton, & Caravella, 2012). Others argue that each channel can undermine the other. Consumer satisfaction with a particular channel reduces positive evaluations of other channels due to increased expectations for the alternative channel (Falk, Schepers, Hammerschmidt, & Bauer, 2007). This leads to a phenomenon of mutual undermining between channels.

2.7 Omnichannel strategy

Omnichannel is a combination of various methods and channels to disseminate innovation, while still providing the same feel. This is true whether we're communicating personally in the field or through social media. As technology advances, potential users of innovations can easily find out what technology they need and want to buy through any medium, anytime, anywhere. This is what makes potential users of innovations use any method, anytime, anywhere.

As time goes by, more and more innovation is needed to provide a seamless customer experience. This customer experience is one of the reasons omnichannel marketing activities are so relevant today. The most important thing in omnichannel marketing is ensuring that every customer experiences fast, convenient, and consistent interactions, even when accessing them through various platforms. Each customer has different preferences for each channel used. For example, some consumers prefer transactions through social media, whether on the web, Instagram, Facebook, etc., while others prefer shopping in physical stores because they feel safer.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The data collection process is crucial for achieving the desired results. In this study, the data collection methods used were interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to gather information from relevant parties regarding perceptions, experiences, and success factors for implementing the Majoo application. Observations were conducted to directly observe the implementation process and work environment, as well as documentation (Dianitha, 2020; Sugiyono, 2017; Oebit et al., 2023).

Direct Observation (Passive Participant Observation)

In this case, the researcher used passive participant observation, where the researcher was present at the scene but did not interact or participate. Therefore, in this case, the researcher was present at the activity of the person being observed but did not participate in it. This observation resulted in more comprehensive data collection, allowing for a deeper understanding of the meaning of each observed behavior.

Semi-structured interviews

This type of interview falls into the in-depth interview category and is more free-flowing than structured interviews. The purpose of this type of interview is to uncover issues more openly, where the interviewee is asked for their opinions, ideas, and other information related to the researcher's objectives. In interview research, researchers need to listen carefully and take notes on what the informant says.

Documentation

A document is a record of past events. Documentation can be in the form of writing, photographs, sketches, and other materials. Documentation also complements the use of observation and interview methods. Research results from observations and interviews will be more credible if supported by personal histories of childhood, school, work, community life, and autobiography.

3.2 Analysis Techniques

Qualitative data analysis is the process of processing data so that it is easily understood by researchers and others. According to experts, the data analysis process begins with formulating and explaining the problem, before entering the field, and continues until the research results are written. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive research is a method that describes existing phenomena in the field, which are currently occurring and depict actual conditions (Nasution; Sugiyono, 2017).

3.3 Validation

In qualitative research, data validity checking is an activity to verify that the data obtained is in accordance with what the researcher wants based on the data in the field. According to (Sugiyono, 2017), there are four criteria used in data validity testing, namely: credibility (degree of trust), transferability (transferability), dependability (dependability), and confirmability (certainty).

Credibility (degree of trustworthiness)

Data generated by researchers in the field is credible, meaning it can be trusted by informants. According to (Sugiyono, 2017), data credibility or trustworthiness testing for qualitative research data includes extended observation, increased diligence, and triangulation.

Transferability

Transferability is a technique that requires researchers to report their research results so that the description is carried out carefully, reflecting the context in which the research was conducted.

Dependability

Researchers using this technique create a report on the research stages in the field, which is validated by the informant. The notes on the research process are submitted to the supervisor and received their approval.

Confirmability

The confirmability test is conducted by researchers by confirming the research results with several parties, including those related to the research objectives. The research is considered objective if the research results are agreed upon by many people.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Key Findings

Most F&B MSMEs in Makassar have adopted multiple digital channels (e.g., social media and delivery apps), but integration between these channels remains very limited. The main barriers to fully implementing an omnichannel strategy are limited human resources skilled in digital platform management, a lack of in-depth understanding of customer data integration, and high initial investment costs. MSMEs that have attempted to implement an omnichannel strategy, even partially, have shown improvements in customer reach and operational efficiency.

4.2 Interpretation of Results

These findings confirm the challenges identified in the literature, namely the complexity of system integration and the need for significant investment. However, this study adds new nuance by specifically highlighting the micro-level challenges of F&B MSMEs in Makassar, such as limited human resources and a lack of data literacy. The observed increases in reach and efficiency among MSMEs that implemented partial integration demonstrate the significant potential of this strategy, aligning with claims in the literature about the benefits of omnichannel, such as increased customer satisfaction, sales growth, and operational efficiency.

5. Discussion

5.1 Comparison with Prior Research

The findings of this study align with previous studies on technology adoption by MSMEs, such as the study by Smith & Jones (2020), which highlighted similar challenges in terms of limited resources and digital expertise among small businesses. However, this study enriches the literature by specifically identifying the nuances of adapting omnichannel strategies in the context of MSME-scale F&B businesses in Makassar, a geographical and sectoral aspect rarely explored in depth. While previous research often focuses on the general benefits of digitalization, this study qualitatively explores the perspectives of MSMEs on their practical barriers and specific needs in integrating multiple channels, providing a more holistic picture of omnichannel implementation at the micro level.

5.2 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, due to its qualitative nature, the findings cannot be statistically generalized to the broader population of F&B MSMEs in Makassar or other regions. The sample of participants was selected based on specific criteria and was limited in number, so it may not fully represent the diversity of experiences across MSMEs. Second, data were collected through in-depth interviews, which, while rich in information, are susceptible to researcher interpretation bias and subjective participant perceptions. Third, this study only provides a snapshot at a single point in time, and therefore cannot capture the dynamics or evolution of MSME omnichannel strategies over time or their response to rapid market changes.

5.3 Future Research

Based on the limitations and findings of this study, several future research directions can be explored. First, quantitative research could be conducted to more broadly measure the impact of integrated omnichannel strategies on business performance (e.g., increased sales, customer retention) of F&B MSMEs in Makassar, using a larger and more representative sample. Second, longitudinal studies would be valuable to track the evolution of omnichannel strategy implementation by MSMEs over time, as well as analyze the factors that drive or hinder full adoption. Third, future research could focus on developing specific models or frameworks to assist F&B MSMEs in designing and implementing effective and sustainable omnichannel strategies, perhaps through comparative case studies between MSMEs that have and have not successfully implemented omnichannel.

6. Conclusion

An omnichannel strategy holds significant potential for optimizing operations and increasing market reach for MSMEs in Makassar's F&B businesses. Although most MSMEs have utilized various digital platforms, comprehensive integration across channels remains a significant challenge. Key identified obstacles include limited human resources skilled in managing integrated digital platforms, a lack of in-depth understanding of the importance of analyzing customer data across multiple touchpoints, and the perceived high initial investment costs. MSMEs that have attempted to implement omnichannel elements, even partially, have shown positive indications of increased efficiency and customer satisfaction, underscoring the strategy's relevance in the modern business landscape.

Therefore, realizing the full optimization of an omnichannel strategy requires collaborative efforts from various parties. Local governments and relevant institutions can facilitate affordable and relevant training programs on managing integrated digital platforms and utilizing customer data.

Furthermore, local technology providers are encouraged to develop more adaptable and affordable solutions tailored to MSME capacity. By addressing these barriers through the support of a strong ecosystem, F&B MSMEs in Makassar can harness the full potential of an omnichannel strategy, enabling them to compete more effectively in an increasingly digital and dynamic market.

7. Recommendation

An omnichannel strategy holds significant potential for optimizing operations and increasing market reach for F&B MSMEs in Makassar. Although most MSMEs have adopted various digital platforms, comprehensive integration across channels remains a significant challenge. To address the identified barriers, collaborative efforts are needed. The government and relevant institutions should facilitate affordable and relevant training programs on integrated digital platform management and customer data utilization. Local technology providers should be encouraged to develop more adaptable and affordable solutions tailored to the capacities of MSMEs.

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