

STRATEGIC UTILIZATION OF TIKTOK AS A PRODUCT PROMOTION MEDIA AMONG MILLENNIAL MSMES: AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

PEMANFAATAN STRATEGIS TIKTOK SEBAGAI MEDIA PROMOSI PRODUK DI KALANGAN UMKM MILENIAL: SEBUAH PERSPEKTIF ANALITIS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the utilization of TikTok as a product promotion medium by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) owned by millennials. In today's rapidly evolving digital era, TikTok has become one of the most popular and potential social media platforms for reaching consumers broadly and quickly. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five millennial MSME actors who actively use TikTok to market their products. The findings reveal that TikTok is perceived as an effective platform for building brand awareness, creating audience engagement, and significantly increasing sales. MSME actors also take advantage of creative features such as music, filters, and hashtag challenges to attract consumer attention. Nevertheless, challenges such as algorithm changes, limited technical knowledge, and the need for consistent content remain obstacles to optimizing TikTok utilization. This study provides new insights into relevant digital promotion strategies for MSMEs in the era of social media, particularly through creative approaches favored by the millennial generation.

Keywords: *TikTok, MSMEs, millennials, product promotion, digital marketing, social media.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pemanfaatan platform TikTok sebagai media promosi produk oleh pelaku Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) dari kalangan milenial. Dalam era digital yang semakin berkembang, TikTok telah menjadi salah satu media sosial yang paling populer dan potensial dalam menjangkau konsumen secara luas dan cepat. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap lima pelaku UMKM milenial yang aktif menggunakan TikTok untuk memasarkan produk mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa TikTok dianggap sebagai platform yang efektif dalam membangun awareness merek, menciptakan keterlibatan (engagement) dengan audiens, serta meningkatkan penjualan secara signifikan. Para pelaku UMKM juga memanfaatkan fitur-fitur kreatif seperti musik, filter, dan hashtag challenge untuk menarik perhatian konsumen. Kendati demikian, tantangan seperti perubahan algoritma, keterbatasan pengetahuan teknis, dan kebutuhan akan konten yang konsisten menjadi hambatan dalam pemanfaatan TikTok secara optimal. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan baru mengenai strategi promosi digital yang relevan bagi UMKM di era media sosial, khususnya melalui pendekatan kreatif yang disukai generasi milenial.

Kata kunci : *TikTok, UMKM, milenial, promosi produk, pemasaran digital, media sosial.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to the marketing landscape. One of its main impacts is the shift from conventional marketing methods toward digital marketing, which is more dynamic, interactive, and social media-based. In this context, TikTok has emerged as one of the fastest-growing social media platforms, particularly among younger generations. The application has evolved not only as a source of entertainment but also as an effective promotional medium for various actors, including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

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According to (Ilahi et al., 2025) , modern marketing requires a more interactive and consumer-oriented approach, in which digital media plays a crucial role in building relationships and creating shared value. Within this framework, TikTok as a short-video-based social media platform presents new opportunities for digital marketing strategies, particularly for MSMEs.

MSMEs play an essential role in Indonesia's economic growth, especially in job creation and income generation. However, one of the main challenges faced by MSMEs is the limitation in promoting their products widely and efficiently. In addressing this challenge, millennial entrepreneurs—who currently dominate the MSME sector tend to be more adaptive to technology and social media. They utilize various digital platforms, including TikTok, to introduce and promote their products to broader audiences (Amang et al., 2023).

TikTok offers unique features through creative short-form videos, a powerful personalization algorithm, and interactive tools such as hashtag challenges and live streaming. These features provide great opportunities for millennial MSME actors to build brand awareness, increase engagement, and ultimately drive sales conversion. Nevertheless, not all MSMEs possess the knowledge and strategies necessary to fully maximize TikTok's potential as a promotional medium.

Based on this background, the present study aims to understand how millennial MSME actors utilize TikTok as a product promotion medium. It also seeks to explore their experiences, strategies, and challenges in marketing through the platform. By employing a qualitative approach, this study is expected to provide in-depth insights into digital marketing practices on TikTok and its contribution to MSME growth in the digital era.

In addition to its popularity among social media users, TikTok has increasingly attracted attention in digital marketing due to its ability to create content virality. Its algorithm, which allows content to reach wide audiences without requiring a large follower base, serves as one of the main attractions for business actors, particularly MSMEs with limited promotional budgets. On the other hand, millennials, as digital natives, are generally more creative and open to innovation in marketing strategies. This combination creates an ecosystem worth investigating, especially in the context of social media utilization as an effective and efficient marketing tool (Arifuddin & Alimuddin, 2023)

The choice of TikTok as the focus of this study is also supported by the increasing usage of the application in Indonesia. According to (Ilahi et al., 2023), Indonesia ranks second worldwide in terms of the number of TikTok users. This indicates TikTok's great potential as a platform that can be maximized for promotional and business development purposes, particularly by millennial MSME actors who are already familiar with the digital ecosystem (Ilahi et al., 2024).

However, despite its vast potential, knowledge and skills gaps remain among MSME actors in optimizing TikTok utilization. Many still lack understanding of how to design attractive content, build strong audience interaction, and measure the effectiveness of marketing strategies on the platform. Therefore, it is important to explore more deeply the real experiences of millennial MSME actors in using TikTok as a promotional tool what they do, how they adapt, and the challenges they encounter (Fahdia et al., 2022)

Through a qualitative approach, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically, particularly in enriching the literature on digital marketing in the social media era. It also aims to provide relevant insights for MSME actors, marketing practitioners, and policymakers in supporting the digital transformation of the MSME sector.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to gain in-depth insights into the experiences of millennial MSME actors in utilizing TikTok as a product promotion medium. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is considered most appropriate for understanding social realities and the subjective meanings constructed by business actors within the context of digital marketing through social media. The research is descriptive in nature, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the strategies, motivations, and challenges faced by MSME actors in using TikTok (Strauss & Corbin, 2003)

The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, with criteria including: MSME actors belonging to the millennial generation (aged 25–40 years), running a micro or small enterprise that has been operating for at least one year, actively using TikTok for product promotion, and willing to participate as informants in the study. The research locations were adjusted to the informants' domiciles, which were spread across major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta, known for their high social media penetration.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide, allowing the researcher to explore data flexibly while maintaining focus. In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted observations of the informants' TikTok content to directly examine how promotional strategies were applied. Documentation in the form of screenshots, TikTok account profiles, and other supplementary data was also collected to strengthen the findings.

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process began with interview transcription, data reduction, coding, and the identification of key themes emerging from the informants' experiences. To ensure data validity, the researcher employed source and method triangulation, comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to confirm consistency and enhance the reliability of the findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that millennial MSME actors utilize TikTok as a promotional medium through various strategies tailored to their target markets. TikTok is perceived as a unique platform because it emphasizes visually engaging short videos that can easily reach a wide audience within a short time. Informants stated that their initial interest in using TikTok arose after observing the success of other entrepreneurs who went viral through their content on the platform. This became their main motivation to learn and experiment with creating promotional content themselves.

In practice, MSME actors implement creative promotional strategies such as showcasing production processes, sharing brand stories, and using popular trending audio. They also actively participate in hashtag challenges relevant to their products to enhance visibility. The content they produce is not solely aimed at selling but also at building narratives and a sense of closeness with the audience. Some MSME actors even regularly conduct live sessions on TikTok to directly introduce products and interact with potential buyers, which was considered highly effective in fostering trust.

One of TikTok's main strengths, according to informants, is its algorithm, which allows new accounts or those with few followers to still have the opportunity to go viral if their content is engaging. This gives hope and encouragement to MSME actors who are just beginning their digital promotion journey. However, despite the vast opportunities, MSME actors still face challenges. Difficulties in producing consistent content, limited time, and a lack of video editing skills were among the most common obstacles. Some informants admitted that they had to learn independently or even seek assistance from others to manage their accounts.

Another challenge lies in TikTok's unpredictable algorithm changes. At times, carefully produced content fails to gain broad reach, while simple content unexpectedly goes viral. This situation compels MSME actors to continuously experiment and adjust their strategies to remain relevant and effectively engage audiences. Adaptability and awareness of trends were highlighted as key factors for sustainability on the platform.

In terms of impact, MSME actors acknowledged that TikTok has had a positive influence on their business growth, particularly in increasing brand awareness and consumer interaction. Although not all content directly generated sales, the growth in followers, comments, and visits to online stores indicates that TikTok promotion contributes significantly to brand building and market expansion. Some informants even mentioned that TikTok became the primary channel driving surges in orders.

The discussion of these findings highlights that TikTok is not merely an entertainment-based social media platform but also a powerful promotional medium, especially for millennial MSME actors who are adaptive to technological advancements. The platform enables businesses to communicate brand messages in a more personal and emotional manner while reaching consumers on a larger scale.

With authentic and appealing content approaches, TikTok provides MSMEs with opportunities to compete even with larger brands that have greater resources.

The study emphasizes that TikTok functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a space for community building and customer engagement. Many MSME actors reported that audiences often responded positively to behind-the-scenes content, interactive storytelling, and authentic brand messages, which fostered a stronger emotional attachment to the brand. This indicates that digital promotion through TikTok aligns with the principles of relationship marketing, where long-term trust and engagement are prioritized over one-time transactions.

From a strategic perspective, TikTok offers MSMEs a relatively low-cost marketing channel compared to traditional advertising methods. This affordability is especially valuable for millennial entrepreneurs, who often operate with limited financial resources but demonstrate high adaptability to digital innovations. By leveraging TikTok's creative features, MSMEs can maximize visibility without incurring significant costs, making it a democratizing platform that levels the playing field between small businesses and established corporations.

Academically, the findings of this study contribute to the discourse on digital marketing in emerging economies, particularly in the Indonesian context where MSMEs play a vital role in economic growth. It highlights how generational characteristics of millennials—such as digital savviness, openness to experimentation, and preference for interactive communication—shape their approach to marketing. Furthermore, the study enriches the literature on social media marketing by positioning TikTok not merely as an entertainment platform but as a strategic ecosystem for business sustainability.

Practically, the insights from this research can guide policymakers, digital marketing practitioners, and MSME development agencies in designing training programs that enhance digital literacy, creative content production, and platform-specific marketing strategies. For MSME actors themselves, the study underscores the need to maintain consistency, authenticity, and adaptability in order to optimize the benefits of TikTok promotion.

Overall, these results affirm the importance of MSME actors' ability to leverage social media, particularly TikTok, as part of a more creative and responsive digital marketing strategy that aligns with contemporary consumer behavior. Mastery of content creation techniques, understanding of the algorithm, and the capacity to build relationships with audiences are key factors in successful promotion on this platform. TikTok thus opens new opportunities for millennial MSMEs to grow in the digital economy era, provided they are supported by sufficient digital literacy and a willingness to continually learn.

Finally, while TikTok presents considerable opportunities, the study also calls attention to the need for sustainable digital strategies. Over-reliance on a single platform could expose MSMEs to risks associated with algorithm changes or shifts in user behavior. Therefore, integrating TikTok with other digital channels, such as Instagram, WhatsApp Business, or e-commerce platforms, could provide a more resilient marketing approach.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that TikTok plays a strategic role as a digital promotional medium for millennial MSME actors. The platform not only provides space to introduce products but also enables the creation of emotional connections with the audience through personal, creative, and easily accessible content. Millennial entrepreneurs utilize TikTok because of its high potential to spread content quickly and widely, even for new accounts. This offers significant opportunities, particularly for those with limited promotional budgets.

MSME actors employ various strategies in creating promotional content, ranging from showcasing production processes, sharing testimonials, following trends and challenges, to conducting live sessions. The content is not solely focused on sales but also on building brand image and fostering closeness with audiences. This proves that humanistic and communicative promotional approaches are more favored by TikTok users, especially the younger generation as the primary market.

Nevertheless, challenges remain in utilizing TikTok, including time constraints, lack of technical skills in video production, and the unpredictability of TikTok's algorithm, which makes content distribution inconsistent. However, MSME actors show strong adaptability and a willingness to learn, demonstrated by their continuous efforts to experiment and evaluate promotional strategies.

The impact of TikTok usage on MSME businesses has been proven positive, particularly in enhancing brand visibility, consumer interaction, and market reach. In some cases, TikTok even serves as the main channel that significantly increases sales. This indicates that when used consistently and strategically, TikTok can serve as an effective digital marketing tool for MSMEs in the digital era.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of digital literacy, creativity, and perseverance in leveraging social media as a promotional tool. TikTok provides vast opportunities for millennial MSMEs to grow and develop without relying on conventional promotional methods that require high costs. Therefore, the ability to continuously learn and innovate becomes the key for MSME actors to remain competitive in today's increasingly dynamic digital business landscape.

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