
Business Communication Adaptation of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Transition from Offline Sales Systems to Digital Marketplaces

Elsaday Sihombing¹, Zehroh², Rio Kurniawan³

^{1,2,3} Prodi Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Budaya, Universitas

Trunodjoyo Madura, Bangkalan, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

elsadaysihombing2@gmail.com, fzhr335@gmail.com,

rio.kurniawan@gmail.com

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has brought changes in various fields, including the business sector. These changes encourage many Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to shift from offline sales systems to digital marketplaces. This transition not only changes the way businesses sell their products but also affects the pattern of communication with consumers. This study aims to examine the adaptation process of business communication among MSMEs during the transition from offline to digital marketplaces, the changes in communication patterns, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the process. This research employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results show that MSMEs have shifted their communication patterns from face-to-face interactions to digital communication through chat features, product descriptions, and customer reviews. Fast responses and communicative language also play an important role in building consumer trust. However, several obstacles are still encountered, such as low digital literacy and limited ability to manage digital communication. Therefore, the ability to adapt business communication becomes an important factor in improving the competitiveness of MSMEs in the digital era.

Keywords– Business Communication, MSMEs, Digital Marketplace, Communication Adaptation.



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1. Introduction

The proliferation of digital technology has brought about profound transformations across various dimensions of contemporary life, particularly within the economic and business sectors. Digital transformation has precipitated a paradigm shift from traditional business systems toward technology-driven models. This transition has not only affected transactional processes but has also fundamentally altered the modes through which business actors interact and communicate with consumers. Communication that was once conducted through face-to-face interactions is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, enabling faster, more flexible, and geographically unrestricted market reach (Sitompul et al., 2025)

In the current digital era, business actors are compelled to leverage various digital platforms as primary channels for communication and marketing. Marketplace applications, social media, and instant messaging platforms have become prevalent tools for establishing and maintaining consumer relationships. This transformation has been catalyzed by behavioral shifts in society, which has grown increasingly reliant on the internet to fulfill everyday needs, including shopping activities. The widespread accessibility of the internet and growing smartphone penetration have prompted consumers to prefer online transactions, which are perceived as more convenient, efficient, and time-saving compared to conventional methods (Aurynnia et al., n.d.)

One sector significantly impacted by digital technological advancement is the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector. As a primary driver of Indonesia's national economy, MSMEs play a pivotal role in generating employment, enhancing community income, and supporting regional economic growth. However, amid rapid technological development, MSMEs are required to adapt to dynamic business environments in order to remain competitive. Digitalization has emerged as one of the primary strategies adopted by MSME actors to sustain and expand their businesses.

The growth of marketplace platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, TikTok Shop, and various other e-commerce platforms has prompted a large number of

MSMEs to transition from offline to online selling systems. These platforms offer a range of operational advantages, including digital payment systems, logistics services, product promotion tools, and integrated seller-buyer communication features. Furthermore, digitalization has opened new opportunities for MSMEs to expand their market reach beyond geographic boundaries and improve overall operational efficiency (Sitompul et al., 2025)

Despite these opportunities, the transition from offline to online commerce also presents considerable challenges. Common obstacles faced by MSMEs include low digital literacy, limited human resources, insufficient understanding of digital technology, and intensifying competition within marketplace environments. Business actors are not only required to master digital tools but must also adapt their communication and marketing strategies to align with the characteristics and expectations of digital consumers (Sitompul et al., 2025)

The shift from offline systems to digital marketplace platforms does not merely alter the mode of selling; it fundamentally transforms the patterns of business communication employed by MSME actors. Whereas communication was previously conducted through direct interpersonal interaction, digital communication is now mediated through chat features, product descriptions, visual content, customer reviews, and social media. Consequently, the ability to compose clear, engaging, and persuasive messages, as well as to respond promptly, has become a critical factor in establishing consumer trust within digital environments (Rahayu et al., 2021)

These changes are further compounded by evolving consumer behavior in the digital era. Contemporary consumers are increasingly proactive in seeking product information online prior to making purchase decisions. They tend to compare prices, read customer reviews, evaluate testimonials, and assess the quality of seller responsiveness. This dynamic underscores that MSME success in the marketplace is not solely determined by product quality, but is equally contingent upon the capacity to build effective communication and foster meaningful relationships with customers (Aurynnia et al., n.d.).

Social media platforms have also emerged as effective communication channels supporting MSME marketing activities. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp Business, Facebook, and TikTok enable business actors to disseminate product information, engage directly with customers, receive feedback and complaints, and cultivate a broader business image. The strategic use of social media can enhance the effectiveness of marketing communication while simultaneously strengthening the relationship between business actors and consumers (Aurynnia et al., n.d.).

These phenomena collectively indicate that business communication adaptation constitutes a critical factor in MSME success in the digital era. The ability of business actors to align their communication strategies with the characteristics of digital media and the evolving needs of consumers can generate positive impacts on consumer trust, loyalty, and purchase decision-making. Moreover, responsive and interactive communication enables MSMEs to maintain their competitiveness amid the increasingly intense landscape of digital business competition.

Grounded in the aforementioned context, this study aims to investigate the process of business communication adaptation undertaken by MSMEs during the transition from offline selling systems to digital marketplace platforms, the changes in communication patterns following digital adaptation, and the factors that facilitate or impede this adaptation process. The findings are expected to contribute to the academic discourse on digital business communication while providing practical guidance for MSME actors seeking to optimize their use of digital platforms to enhance business competitiveness.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach, designed to yield in-depth insights into how MSME actors adapt their business communication when transitioning from direct selling systems to digital marketplace platforms. The qualitative approach was selected because the study's focus centers on the meanings, experiences, and processes encountered by the

research subjects, rather than on statistically-based data. As posited by (Dan, n.d.), qualitative research aims to explore the natural condition of an object, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument, and data analysis conducted through an inductive approach.

The research participants consisted of MSME actors who had undergone the transition from offline to digital marketplace operations. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, wherein individuals were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selection criteria required that informants be MSME actors who: actively sold products on marketplace platforms such as Shopee and Tokopedia; possessed prior experience operating an offline business; had experience engaging with consumers through digital channels; and were willing to participate in the research. The research focus concentrated on the business communication adaptation of MSMEs within the digital marketplace context, encompassing the shift in communication patterns from offline to online modalities, strategies for conveying messages to consumers, utilization of marketplace features for communication purposes, and strategies implemented for building consumer trust.

Data were collected through three primary instruments: in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to gather insights into MSME actors' experiences prior to and following the adoption of marketplace platforms, the evolution of their consumer interaction approaches, strategies employed to attract consumer attention, and challenges encountered in digital communication. Observation was conducted in a non-participatory manner by monitoring the communication activities of MSME actors within the marketplace, including storefront presentation, language usage in interactions, responsiveness to customer inquiries, and consumer reviews and evaluations. Supporting data were obtained through document analysis, encompassing screenshots of customer conversations, product descriptions, customer feedback, and promotional visual content used in digital marketing activities.

Data processing followed the interactive analysis model proposed by (Miles et al., n.d.), comprising three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction phase, information obtained from the field was filtered and categorized in accordance with the research focus. Subsequently, data were presented in descriptive narrative form organized around themes relevant to changes in interaction patterns, communication strategies, and challenges encountered during the adaptation process. The final phase involved drawing conclusions based on the interpretation of analyzed data, thereby providing comprehensive responses to the research objectives.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Business Communication Adaptation of MSMEs in the Transition to Digital Marketplace

The findings of this study indicate that the process of business communication adaptation undertaken by MSMEs during the transition from offline systems to digital marketplace platforms involves not merely a change in the sales medium, but a fundamental reconstitution of the modes of interaction with consumers. Prior to adopting marketplace platforms, communication between sellers and buyers generally occurred through direct face-to-face interaction. Following the adoption of digital platforms, however, interactions are predominantly conducted through chat features, product descriptions, visual content, and customer review systems.

This situation underscores that business communication plays a crucial role in supporting business success. Communication functions not merely as a vehicle for transmitting product or service information, but also serves as a mechanism for building customer relationships and establishing the trust that influences purchase decision-making.

The findings of this study are consistent with the marketing communication perspective articulated by (Education et al., 2017), who assert that communication functions to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the products or services being offered. Within the digital marketplace context,

communication has shifted from a unidirectional model to a more interactive paradigm, as consumers can provide immediate responses through direct messaging and review systems. Consequently, the capacity of MSME actors to compose informative and persuasive messages constitutes a fundamental element influencing the success of product marketing.\

3.2 Changes in MSME Communication Patterns in the Digital Era

The transformation in communication patterns further underscores that MSME actors are required to adapt their communication strategies to the characteristics of digital media. The use of accessible language, transparent information presentation, and prompt responsiveness have emerged as pivotal elements that consumers prioritize. Furthermore, the use of product images and videos has enabled sellers to convey their messages to consumers in a more engaging and compelling manner. These findings collectively indicate that business communication in the digital era is characterized by properties fundamentally distinct from those of traditional communication systems.

These findings align with those of (Aurynnia et al., n.d.), who demonstrate that the advancement of digital technology has transformed consumer behavior from direct shopping activities toward platform-based digital shopping. Contemporary consumers increasingly rely on marketplace platforms and social media to seek product information prior to making purchase decisions. They also tend to scrutinize customer reviews, evaluate service quality, and assess seller responsiveness as the basis for their purchasing decisions.

Moreover, (Rahayu et al., 2021) demonstrate that the transition from offline to online systems has generated positive effects on marketing communication efficiency, as information can be disseminated more rapidly, reach a broader consumer base, and incur relatively lower costs compared to conventional marketing methods. These effects are similarly experienced by MSME actors who utilize marketplace platforms as their primary channels for communication and product marketing.

Beyond marketing communication frameworks, the findings can also be interpreted through the lens of new media theory as articulated by (Sihura et al.,

2025). This theory posits that digital media is characterized by its interactive, flexible, and bidirectional nature, enabling communication to occur without limitations of space or time. The use of digital media through marketplace platforms affords MSME actors the opportunity to reach a wider consumer base while simultaneously building stronger customer relationships. Interactions facilitated through messaging features and consumer reviews generate more transparent communication and exert significant influence on consumer trust levels.

The utilization of marketplace features - such as chat functions, product descriptions, consumer ratings, and reviews - enables bidirectional communication between sellers and buyers. Such interactions function not only as transactional mechanisms but also as instruments for building customer trust and loyalty. The higher the quality of communication conducted by MSME actors, the greater the probability of repeat purchases and positive consumer reviews.

3.3 Enabling and Inhibiting Factors in MSME Business Communication Adaptation

As a sector contributing significantly to the Indonesian economy, MSMEs face various challenges associated with digitalization. Shifts in consumer behavior patterns and increasing levels of business competition have incentivized MSME actors to adopt digital marketplace platforms as tools for expanding market share. The presence of platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and various other e-commerce sites facilitates transaction processing and consumer interaction. Features including messaging systems, product descriptions, ratings, and consumer reviews have emerged as critical elements in seller-buyer communication dynamics.

The transformations experienced by MSMEs in utilizing digital marketplace platforms reflect an ongoing process of adaptation to a continuously evolving business environment. This adaptation is manifested in the capacity of business actors to modify their information delivery approaches, select appropriate communication media, and build consumer relationships through

digital platforms. MSMEs that successfully adapt to technological change tend to exhibit greater opportunities for sustaining their operations and enhancing competitiveness.

Conversely, deficiencies in technological understanding and limited digital communication competencies can constitute significant barriers to business development. Such challenges may impede MSME actors from optimizing their use of marketplace platforms, particularly in establishing effective consumer communication.

The findings reveal that the success of MSMEs in digital marketplace environments is determined not solely by the quality of the products offered, but is equally influenced by the capacity to build effective, responsive, and consumer-oriented communication. Accordingly, business communication adaptation represents a critical success factor enabling MSMEs to navigate technological advancement and increasingly complex business competition.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research conducted on the business communication adaptation of MSMEs during the transition from offline modalities to digital marketplace platforms, it can be concluded that digital transformation encompasses not only changes to the sales system but also produces significant and far-reaching transformations in the style and nature of business communication. MSMEs that previously relied on direct interpersonal interaction must now adapt to digital communication methods mediated through platforms including messaging features, product descriptions, and customer feedback systems. This transformation compels MSME actors to convey clearer, more engaging, and more persuasive messages without the affordances of direct customer contact.

This study indicates that MSME business communication adaptation is characterized by several key changes: the adoption of simpler and more accessible language, improvements in response speed to customer inquiries, and the strategic utilization of platform features to strengthen interaction and build consumer trust. Proactive and interconnected communication has emerged as a

critical factor in enhancing consumer trust levels and stimulating purchase decision-making. However, throughout the adaptation process, MSMEs also encounter significant challenges, including limited understanding of digital technology, insufficient familiarity with the behavioral characteristics of online consumers, and inadequate competencies in effective digital communication management. These challenges constitute obstacles to the optimal utilization of marketplace platforms as business communication instruments. Conversely, several enabling factors support the success of MSME communication adaptation, including accessible technology infrastructure, user-friendly marketplace platforms, and growing awareness among MSME actors regarding the importance of digitalization in contemporary business operations.

It can therefore be concluded that the success of MSMEs in adapting to digital marketplace environments is substantially determined by their capacity to align business communication strategies with the characteristics of digital media and the evolving needs of consumers. Effective communication adaptation will contribute to enhanced consumer trust, loyalty, and MSME competitiveness in the digital era. Future research is recommended to investigate quantitative dimensions of this relationship and explore longitudinal changes in MSME communication strategies across different sectors and regional contexts.

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