

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31933/dijdbm.v5i2>

Received: 05 February 2024, Revised: 22 February, 2024, Publish: 11 March 2024

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The Impact of Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities on Marketing Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises: Case Study in West Lombok Province

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Abstract : This research investigates the influence of Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities on SME Marketing Performance in West Lombok Province, Indonesia. The research results show that Digital Marketing has a positive and significant impact on the Marketing Performance of SMEs, and Brand Articulation Ability also plays an important role in improving their performance. In addition, this research reveals that Brand Articulation Ability acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between Digital Marketing and Marketing Performance. These findings have important implications for SME owners and marketing practitioners, highlighting the importance of investing in effective Digital Marketing and developing Brand Articulation Capabilities. The integration of a good Digital Marketing strategy and the ability to convey a clear brand message can help SMEs achieve success in an increasingly digital and competitive business era.

Keywords: digital marketing, brand articulation, marketing performance

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital central role in driving the Indonesian economy (www.djkn.kemenkeu.co.id, 2020). Apart from their significant contribution in creating jobs, SMEs are also a main pillar in driving the country's economic growth and play an important role in the non-oil export sector. (Jayani, 2020). However, the SME sector in Indonesia faces a series of obstacles that hinder its growth and development, with one of the biggest challenges being in the field of marketing (Hanim et al., 2022). marketing performance.

SMEs' ability to build and communicate their brand to customers is often limited, making it difficult for them to retain customers and positively influence their marketing performance. These challenges have been further exacerbated during the global pandemic, which has resulted in a significant decline in SMB marketing performance. In particular, MSMEs in West Nusa Tenggara Province have felt a detrimental economic impact, with reduced sales levels and limited profits.

In the face of these obstacles, digital marketing has emerged as a potential solution (Diez-Martin et al., 2019). Digital marketing gives SMEs the ability to communicate with customers anytime and anywhere, through online channels that can be accessed globally (Masrianto et al., 2022). More than that, digital marketing allows consumers to easily explore various products and services, compare options and make purchasing decisions (Srivastava & Gupta, 2022). It is one of the most effective and efficient tools that SMEs can use to compete in an increasingly competitive business environment.

However, the move from conventional marketing methods to digital marketing is not always smooth (Apasrawirote et al., 2022). Several studies show mixed results regarding the influence of digital marketing on marketing performance. Some claim that digital marketing has a significant positive impact, while others state the opposite. This confusion creates a need to understand more deeply how digital marketing impacts SMEs, particularly in the Indonesian context.

In an effort to fill this knowledge gap, this research will examine two main questions: First, do digital marketing and brand articulation capabilities have an effect on the marketing performance of SMEs? Second, does brand articulation ability function as a mediator in the relationship between digital marketing and SME marketing performance?

This research aims to identify the impact of digital marketing and brand articulation capabilities on SME marketing performance, as well as understand the mediating role played by brand articulation capabilities in linking digital marketing with SME marketing performance. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide valuable insights to SME owners, business stakeholders and researchers in this field, which can be used to develop more effective and sustainable marketing strategies in facing existing marketing challenges.

Digital Marketing

Digital Marketing, as explained by Mehmeti-Bajrami et al. (2022), is a series of marketing activities that cover various aspects, including brand building and the use of various web-based media such as blogs, websites, email, AdWords, and social networking platforms. In perspective Dunakhe & Panse (2022), Digital Marketing describes the use of the internet and other interactive technologies to create interaction and dialogue between companies and identified consumers. In a broader context, digital marketing strategies play an important role in keeping up to date with developments in digital technology, as well as designing plans that are able to attract consumers and shift them to various forms of electronic communication, while maintaining traditional approaches in communicating with consumers (Amin & Mishra, 2022).

Digital marketing has created a significant paradigm shift in the global marketplace, resulting in increased purchasing intent and power from consumers. This has encouraged the development of various implementations of advanced business technology designed to respond quickly to changes in the business landscape. (Costa et al., 2021; Nisa & Pramesti, 2020) In the context of this research, we will use several key Digital Marketing indicators, namely Social Media Marketing Capability, E-commerce Adoption, and Instant Messaging Marketing Orientation.

This approach allows research to more deeply understand and measure the impact of Digital Marketing on SME marketing performance, while considering various important aspects including technology and electronic interactions, all of which are key elements in an effective and comprehensive digital marketing strategy. As such, this research aims to unravel the complexity of the relationship between Digital Marketing and SME marketing performance, in the hope that it will make a valuable contribution in advancing our understanding of how SMEs can increase their competitiveness in the ever-changing digital era.

Brand Articulation

Given the challenges arising from inconsistencies in previous research on the relationship between customer orientation and marketing performance, this study aims to bring further clarification to the mechanisms that may be involved in turning customer orientation into a significant marketing performance outcome. In an effort to fill this research gap, we adopt the Theory of Resource Advantage in Competition (Hunt, 1995; Varadarajan, 2023; Y. J. Wang et al., 2018) as a powerful framework for understanding the relationship between Digital Marketing and marketing performance.

In this context, we introduce a new concept that we call “Brand Articulation Capability” as a mediating variable that allows Digital Marketing to influence marketing performance (Pierre et al., 2011; Skard & Thorbjornsen, 2017). A brand is a valuable asset for a company, which can provide a much-needed competitive advantage. Creating a positive brand image in the market is key to gaining and retaining customers, while satisfying them (Godinho & Garrido, 2017). It's also important to note that a well-built brand can be a valuable resource in a fiercely competitive environment, even in foreign markets (Topolinski et al., 2015).

Brand Articulation Capability, in the context of this research, refers to a company's ability to clearly and effectively convey the brand message to customers. This involves ensuring that the brand appears in the eyes of customers, communicates clearly, and builds a strong and consistent reputation in the eyes of customers. According to the Resource Advantage Theory, companies that have a comparative advantage in terms of Brand Articulation Capability can occupy a superior position in the market and achieve outstanding financial performance (Topolinski et al., 2015).

In its essence, Brand Articulation Capability is a lever that enables companies to optimize their marketing performance. How the brand is articulated to customers is very important in marketing activities, and this involves three key elements: first, the brand must be visible to customers; second, the brand message must be clearly communicated to customers; and third, brands must build a solid and consistent reputation in the eyes of customers. By understanding and measuring these factors, this research aims to explain the central role of Brand Articulation Capability in linking Digital Marketing to marketing performance, and in doing so, answer important questions about how to increase marketing effectiveness in the ever-evolving digital era.

Marketing Performance

The concept of marketing performance is an important element that is often used to evaluate the effectiveness of a company's marketing plan (Nuryakin & Maryati, 2022). It refers to the measures and metrics used to assess the extent to which marketing initiatives are successful in achieving company goals. It is important to note that different corporate cultures and leadership philosophies can influence how companies assess the effectiveness of their marketing initiatives, thus emphasizing the need for diverse uses of marketing performance evaluation.

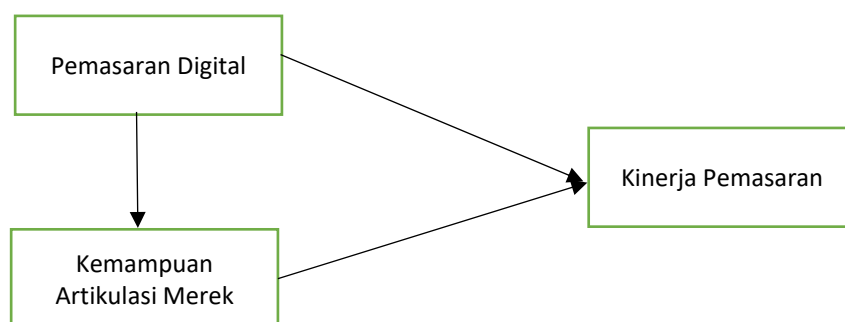
Several previous studies have identified various metrics used to measure marketing performance. For example, research by Propheto et al. (2020) using sales value, profit fluctuations, and changes in the proportion of revenue as indicators of marketing performance in terms of profitability. Additionally, Zahara et al. (2023) measure marketing performance using metrics such as revenue, gross margin, return on investment, and market share. Other research conducted by Markovitch et al. (2020) examined profitability, sales growth, and product performance as metrics of company success.

Su & Yin (2023) links marketing performance to evaluations of a company's sales, customers, revenue, and profit growth to assess its level of quality. Other examples include sales growth, market share, and sales to current customers (Gaitniece, 2018), market share and

sales growth (Skackauskiene & Vilkaite-Vaitone, 2020), new customer onboarding and increased sales to existing customers (Chang et al., 2012) as well as stronger sales revenue growth, ability to acquire new customers, greater market share size, and increased sales to existing customers (Xie, 2022).

There are also other metrics used to measure marketing performance, such as brand market share and brand sales growth (Markovitch et al., 2020), as well as market share (Nuryakin & Maryati, 2022). Based on the findings of this research, the main objective of company performance is to create value that can help in increasing profit levels, profit percentages, sales growth and customer growth.

Our empirical research model, which is based on a literature survey and previous research, can be described as follows.



Literature review and image above, there are four hypotheses formulated in this research as follows:

H₁ : Digital Marketing affects Brand Articulation Ability

H₂ : Digital Marketing affects Marketing Performance

H₃ : Digital Marketing influences Marketing Performance through Brand Articulation Ability.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a quantitative approach using survey methods. A questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale was used to collect respondents' views. A 7-point Likert scale was chosen because previous research shows that respondents are more comfortable in expressing their agreement with this scale, compared to a 5-point Likert scale (Emerson, 2017; Joshi et al., 2015).

The research population includes all small and medium-sized companies registered with the Cooperatives and SMEs Office in West Nusa Tenggara Province and districts/cities in the research area. Sampling was carried out purposively. Respondents invited to participate in this research were entrepreneurs or business owners representing SMEs who fit the population criteria previously explained. To produce a sample that represents the population well, it would be better to use a random sampling method or stratified sampling, if possible.

The questionnaire used to collect data will be designed carefully. The indicators used in the questionnaire will be prepared based on the conceptual framework that has been developed, and will ensure that the indicators are relevant to the research objectives. Before data collection, the questionnaire must go through a validity and reliability testing stage to ensure that the instrument meets research standards.

To analyze the data, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis will be used, which is a powerful statistical method for investigating complex relationships between research variables. This method allows measuring the direct and indirect impact of independent

variables on the dependent variable. SEM analysis should be performed using appropriate statistical software, such as AMOS or LISREL.

Table 1. Variables and Indicators

Variable	Definition	Indicator
Digital Marketing	Digital Marketing is a marketing activity that involves branding and using various web-based media such as blogs, websites, email, AdWords, or social networks.	1. Social Media Marketing Capabilities 2. E-commerce Adoption 3. Instant Messaging Marketing Orientation
Brand Articulation Ability	Brand Articulation Ability is the ability of a company/organization to convey the message contained in its brand to customers clearly	1. The brand is clearly visible to customers 2. The brand communicates clearly to customers 3. Brands build a clear reputation with customers
Marketing Performance	Marketing Performance is the level of marketing achievement in the market.	1. Sales Volume 2. Sales Value 3. Sales Growth in new markets

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collection is a very crucial initial stage in this research process, which is the basis for further analysis. To ensure the quality of the data collected, various measures and techniques have been implemented.

The skewness-kurtosis method, used in this research, is an important statistical approach for evaluating the distribution of data on each research variable. This step is important to understand whether the data follows a normal distribution or not. A data distribution that is close to normal is important in the use of many statistical methods, including Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis.

The results of the skewness and kurtosis analysis, as documented in table 2, show that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables are in the range between +1 and -1. This range reflects that the data distribution on each variable approaches a normal distribution, which is an important assumption in many statistical methods. Thus, the data collected can be considered as data that meets the requirements.

This decision provides a solid basis for proceeding with further statistical analysis. With data that is considered normal data, this research can rely on valid statistical analysis results and accurate interpretation in answering research questions and identifying factors that influence SME marketing performance. Fitting the data to a normal distribution also allowed this study to apply a variety of statistical methods that conform to this assumption, including powerful SEM analysis. Thus, careful initial stages of data collection and thorough skewness-kurtosis analysis have helped ensure that this research is on the right track toward valid and meaningful results.

Table 2 . Skewnes and Kurtosis Analysis

Variable	Items	Skewness	Kurtosis
Digital Marketing	WW1	1,104	1,853
	WW2	-0.933	1,188
	PD3	-1,033	1,598
Brand Articulation	AM1	0.840	0.402
	AM2	-0.800	0.552
	AM3	-0.828	0.672
Marketing Performance	KP1	-0.343	1,413
	KP2	-0.480	0.494
	KP3	0.882	-0.064

Source: data analyzed, 2023

All constructs in this research have undergone a series of tests to ensure the reliability and validity of their constructs, which is an important step in measuring the quality of the data and the suitability of the variables used.

First, confirmatory factor analysis is used to measure the validity of the indicators and produce factor loading values for all latent variable indicators. A factor loading value greater than 0.70 was used as a cutoff for measuring indicator validity, in accordance with the guidelines suggested by Duke et al. (2020). The results, which can be seen in Table 3, show that all indicator factor loading values are estimated to be above the threshold of 0.70. This confirms that all indicators used in this research have passed validity tests and can be considered valid indicators.

Next, to test the reliability of the construct, the composite reliability (CR) method is used. The test results show that all constructs in this study have CR values above the threshold of 0.7, as suggested by Duke et al. (2020). Specifically, Digital Marketing has a CR of 0.824, Brand Articulation Ability of 0.753, and Marketing Performance of 0.874. CR values that exceed this threshold indicate that the constructs have a good level of reliability.

These results underline that all constructs used in this research are not only valid, but also have a high level of reliability. Thus, the data used in statistical analysis can be considered as quality and reliable data, which will produce more credible and meaningful research results. These steps in testing reliability and construct validity provide a strong basis for subsequent analysis and interpretation of research results.

Table 3 . Validity and Reliability

Variable	Indicator	Standard Loading Factor	Standard Error.	Reliability	
				CR	AVE
Digital Marketing	WW1	0.76	0.105	0.824	0.58 4
	WW2	0.815	0.114		
	PD3	0.706	0.101		
Brand Articulation	AM1	0.716	0.068	0.753	0.54 5
	AM2	0.833	0.074		
	AM3	0.900	0.084		
Marketing Performance	KP1	0.764	0.092	0.874	0.6 77
	KP2	0.821	0.098		
	KP3	0.760	0.091		

Source: data analyzed, 2023

Convergent validity is an important step in research to ensure that the items used to measure a construct truly reflect the construct being measured. To test convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was used. The test results show that all constructs in this research, namely Digital Marketing (AVE = 0.58 4), Brand Articulation (AVE = 0.54 5), and Marketing Performance (AVE = 0.6 77), have AVE above the threshold limit 0.5. This threshold, in accordance with the guidelines of Duke et al. (20 20), shows that the items used in measuring the construct have good convergent validity, and effectively reflect the construct being measured.

Furthermore, to ensure that the structural model developed in this research is appropriate to the data collected, a model fit analysis has been carried out. The results showed that this model had a fairly good fit, with a value of $\chi^2 = 41.96$, $P = 0.018$; $CMIN/DF = 1.854$; $GFI = 0.962$; $AGFI = 0.929$; $TLI = 0.968$; $CFI = 0.979$; $RMSEA = 0.057$. These results indicate that the model used in this research is a good model and is in accordance with the data obtained.

Thus, the data used in this research meets the requirements for hypothesis testing. The model developed in this research is appropriate to the expected population, and the items used have good convergent validity. This provides a solid foundation for pursuing further statistical analysis, testing hypotheses and gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence

SME marketing performance. This conclusion strengthens the integrity of the research and trust in the research results produced.

Hypothesis testing found that all relationships proposed in this study were significant (Table 4). In more detail, Digital Marketing is a driver of marketing performance. Brand articulation ability has been shown to be influenced by Digital Marketing ($\gamma = .237, p < .005$). Brand articulation ability also significantly influences Marketing Performance ($\gamma = .399, p < .005$). Digital Marketing has an influence on marketing performance through Brand Articulation Ability ($\gamma = .184, p < .005$). This confirms that Brand Articulation Ability is a mediating variable between Digital Marketing and Marketing Performance.

Table 4 . Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Standard Estimates
H1	0.228***
H2	0.167**
H3	0.400***
Mediation	0.185**

Note: *** 1% significance, ** 5% significance

Source: data analyzed, 2023

The findings of this research have significant implications for the understanding of the factors that influence SME marketing performance. In the context of Digital Marketing, the results of statistical analysis show that Digital Marketing has a positive and significant impact on SME Marketing Performance. The probability value obtained, namely 0.000, is far below the significance level of 0.05, confirming that the Digital Marketing variable has a strong influence on SME Marketing Performance. Therefore, any changes or improvements in Digital Marketing activities can contribute significantly to improving SME Marketing Performance. These results are in line with previous research findings which have stated that Digital Marketing can have a significant positive impact on Marketing Performance (Gaitniece, 2018; Sultoni et al., 2022; Z. Wang & Kim, 2017). This is also consistent with other research showing a positive and significant relationship between marketing strategy and marketing performance (Gupta et al., 2021; Markovitch et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the positive and significant influence of Brand Articulation Ability on SME Marketing Performance is also a strong finding in this research. The probability value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, confirms that Brand Articulation Ability has a significant influence on SME Marketing Performance. This means that changes or improvements in the Brand Articulation Capability variable will make a real contribution to improving SME Marketing Performance. These results are in line with previous research which shows that capabilities in marketing, especially in brand management, can provide sustainable competitive advantage and support business success (Godinho & Garrido, 2017; Pierre et al., 2011; Skard & Thorbjornsen, 2017).

Furthermore, path analysis shows that Digital Marketing has an impact on SME Marketing Performance through Brand Articulation Ability as a mediating variable. These findings reinforce the important role of Brand Articulation Capability in linking Digital Marketing with SME Marketing Performance. The indirect influence of Digital Marketing on Marketing Performance through Brand Articulation Ability is positive and significant, with a probability of 0.003. This indicates that more efforts in Digital Marketing will increase Brand Articulation Capabilities, which in turn will support increased SME Marketing Performance.

With these findings, the research provides a strong foundation for a deeper understanding of the importance of Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities in improving the marketing performance of SMEs. The practical implication of this research is that business owners and marketing practitioners can utilize Digital Marketing as a tool to improve their

Marketing Performance, taking into account the importance of Brand Articulation Capability in this process. In conclusion, Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities are key elements in a marketing strategy that can help SMEs achieve success and sustainable growth in a competitive business environment.

Research Implications

The implications of the findings from this research have significant implications for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) owners and marketing practitioners. This research highlights the importance of focusing on effective Digital Marketing as one of the key strategies to expand SME market reach and increase brand exposure. Therefore, SME owners need to consider allocating greater resources to Digital Marketing as an integral part of their marketing strategy.

In addition, the results of this research strengthen the important role of Brand Articulation Ability in influencing SME Marketing Performance. SME owners must prioritize their ability to convey brand messages clearly and effectively to customers. This includes establishing a strong brand identity, delivering consistent brand messaging, and building a positive brand reputation.

The most prominent implication is the importance of integration between Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities. SMEs can improve their marketing performance by ensuring that their Digital Marketing strategy supports and strengthens the brand message they want to convey. SME owners should consider how Digital Marketing can strengthen brand image and help in more effective brand articulation.

To achieve optimal results, continuous education and training in the areas of Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities is essential. SME owners and marketing practitioners need to keep their knowledge up to date on the latest trends and best practices in the world of digital marketing.

The conclusion of this research provides a positive view that efforts to improve Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities can have a positive impact on SME performance. Therefore, SME owners should view these findings as an opportunity for the growth and success of their business.

Finally, this research underlines the importance of adapting to the digital era. SMEs that are able to adapt to changes in technology and consumer behavior will have a competitive advantage in a market that is constantly changing and increasingly competitive. By keeping these implications in mind, SME owners and marketing practitioners can take appropriate action to optimize their marketing strategies and achieve sustainable success in an increasingly digital business environment.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is that Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities have a strategic role in improving the Marketing Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the digital era. The research findings confirm that Digital Marketing plays an important role in influencing the Marketing Performance of SMEs. In an increasingly digitally connected business environment, activity in cyberspace and social media has a significant positive impact on SMEs' ability to attract customers and influence consumer behavior.

Apart from that, Brand Articulation Capability is also proven to have an equally important role in improving SME Marketing Performance. The ability to clearly and effectively convey a brand message to customers is key to building a strong brand image and influencing consumer perception. This research also makes it clear that Brand Articulation Ability functions as a mediating variable that connects Digital Marketing with SME Marketing

Performance. This means that improvements in Digital Marketing can improve Brand Articulation Capability, which in turn, contributes to improved Marketing Performance.

These results have important implications for SME owners and marketing practitioners. They can optimize their Digital Marketing efforts and enhance Brand Articulation Capabilities to achieve competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive and digital marketplace. This is an important step in ensuring sustainable growth and success of SME businesses in today's digital era.

This research provides valuable insight into the key factors influencing SME marketing success and highlights the importance of adapting to changes in technology and consumer behavior. In conclusion, Digital Marketing and Brand Articulation Capabilities are key elements in a marketing strategy that can help SMEs achieve better results in an ever-changing business environment. With a better understanding of these factors, SMB owners can direct their efforts toward sustainable growth and success in an increasingly digital and competitive marketing world.

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