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## Development of Branding Strengthening Innovations in MSMEs in Surabaya Based on Technopreneurship

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**Abstract:** The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed business practices, including those of MSMEs, which are now required to integrate technology into their entrepreneurial activities. This integration is known as technopreneurship. This study aims to identify the strategies employed by culinary MSMEs in strengthening their branding, explore the characteristics of technopreneurship implementation, examine audience responses to digital content, and analyze the influence of such content on branding reinforcement. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were obtained from 162 respondents through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Spearman's correlation to examine the relationship between audience responses and variables such as content relevance, reputation, and interaction. Complementary qualitative data were gathered from in-depth interviews with three MSMEs actively engaged in digital branding. Findings revealed significant positive correlations audience responses and the three examined variables. The results indicate that relevant and consistent content, strong reputation, and interactive engagement play key roles in enhancing consumer trust and purchase intentions. Interviews confirmed that MSMEs are increasingly aware of the strategic role of social media, even establishing dedicated teams for content creation. These insights highlight the importance of technopreneurship in expanding market reach and sustaining competitiveness in the digital era.

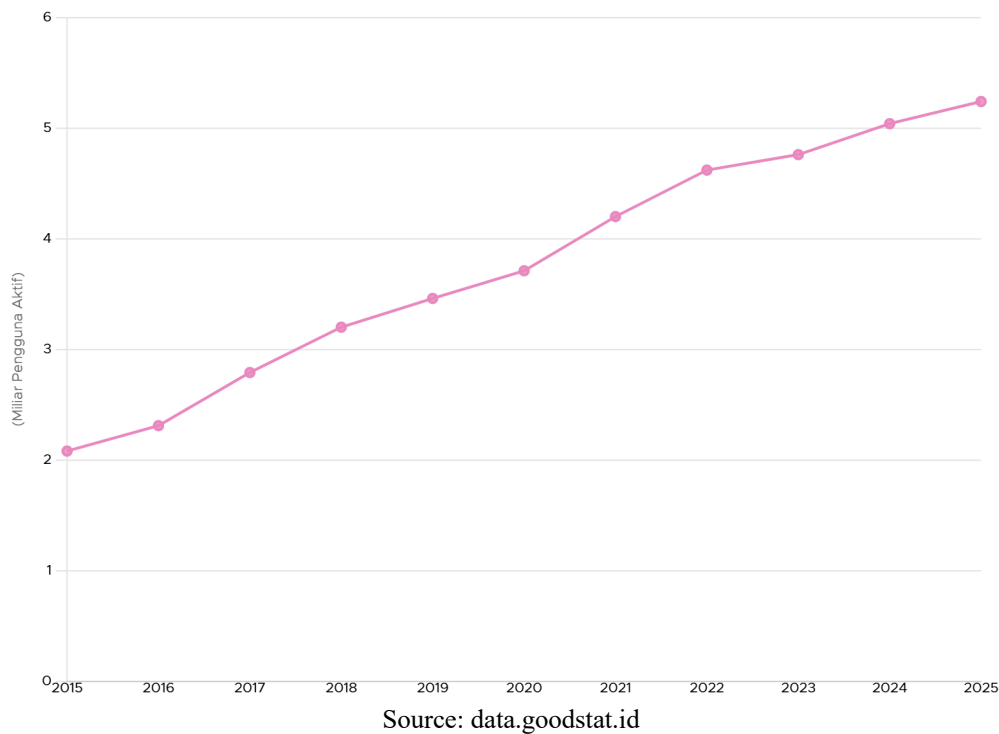
**Keywords:** Branding, Technopreneurship, MSMEs, Surabaya.

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology today is forcing all aspects of life to adapt and coexist with digital innovation, including MSMEs, which can no longer avoid the impact of technological transformation in their business development. The combination of these two things is often known as technopreneurship. Technopreneurship combines the terms 'technology' and 'entrepreneurship'. MSMEs can utilise technology to enhance their

competitiveness while improving cost and time efficiency (Taan, 2023). Technopreneurship is not merely about production using the latest technology; marketing with technology is also part of it. This concept is not just about using technology in business activities, but also reflects a mindset that encourages the courage to innovate, adapt quickly, and seek creative solutions to the challenges of a constantly changing market (Ikhsan & Hasan, 2020).

One of the efforts to combine business with technology is to build brand image or branding through digital platforms. According to data, the number of social media users in Indonesia increases every year and is projected to reach 5.24 billion users by 2025 (Figure 1). This fantastic number of users seems to make it easier for MSMEs to create and strengthen their branding. Strengthening the branding of culinary MSMEs on social media is very important given the high level of competition in this industry. Changes in consumer behaviour, with consumers now seeking more references and conducting transactions digitally, require MSMEs to be consistently active on digital platforms. In addition, social media offers cost-effective and efficient promotion, enabling businesses to reach a wider audience with a limited budget. Strong branding also opens up opportunities for collaboration and business expansion, as brand credibility and appeal are important factors in attracting new partners and customers. In other words, social media can provide great opportunities for business owners to build their brands and businesses (Dayanti and Yulianti, 2023). However, in reality, many MSMEs find it difficult to apply this.



**Figure 1. Social Media User Growth Diagram 2015-2025.**

The challenges faced by culinary MSMEs in strengthening their branding through social media require in-depth study to unravel the challenges and find innovative solutions. Dayanti (2024) states that innovative work behaviour can be encouraged through creative self-efficacy, or the belief that one is capable of overcoming creative challenges, which is instilled in MSME employees. With creative and innovative human resources, SMEs will have a competitive advantage that cannot be replicated by others. On the other hand, consumers currently use digital platforms to assist in purchasing decisions, building a strong digital brand will increase customer acquisition, content consumption, and brand awareness (Wijayanto, 2022). Challenges can be overcome through collaboration between technology and human resources that support each other to meet the expectations of the target audience on digital platforms.

Thus, this study was conducted with the aim of understanding the characteristics of culinary MSMEs in Surabaya that have successfully built their branding through digital platforms. This study also aims to determine the response of the target audience to the content created by MSMEs in Surabaya to strengthen their respective brand identities. In addition, this study is also related to the fourth point of Asta Cita, which aims to hone human resources, especially the nation's youth, so that they are equipped to increase competitiveness and are able to think creatively and innovatively to continue competing in the digital era.

The research questions in this study are:

1. What efforts are culinary MSMEs in Surabaya making to strengthen their business branding?
2. What are the characteristics of culinary MSMEs in Surabaya in strengthening their branding through the application of technopreneurship?
3. How does the target audience respond to digital content related to culinary MSMEs in Surabaya that strengthens MSME branding?
4. How does digital content influence branding for culinary MSMEs in Surabaya?

**METHOD**

This study utilises a mixed methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of these two approaches was chosen to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study. The quantitative method was used to measure the relationship between variables statistically so that the level of correlation could be determined, while the qualitative method was used to explore a deeper understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and responses of the audience to MSME branding activities through social media.

Through the quantitative approach, data was collected using a survey instrument in the form of a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents, namely customers of MSMEs used as samples. The data obtained was then analysed using SPSS to determine the correlation between the variables of content relevance, reputation, interaction, and audience response.

This quantitative analysis examined four variables: content relevance, reputation, interaction, and target audience response. The four variables will be measured using several items on a 1-5 Likert scale, with descriptions ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A total of 12 measurement items were used (presented in Table 1).

The research method contains the type of research, sample and population or research subjects, time and place of research, instruments, procedures, and research techniques, as well as other matters relating to the method of research. This section can be divided into several sub-chapters, but no numbering is necessary. With this number of items, the sample size of 162 met the minimum sample criteria, which is at least ten times the number of constructs in the model, as suggested by Hair et al. (2010).

**Table 1. Operational Variables**

Variable	Indicator
Content Relevance	The content presented is relevant to consumer needs and current trends.
	The content presented is attractively packaged, making me excited to follow further information.
Reputasi	The number of followers is relatively high.
	Reviews and testimonials provided by followers in the comments section are relatively positive.
	There are efforts to expand market reach through collaborations with other influencers/food vloggers.
	Consistency in creating content and building uniqueness value as a competitive advantage for MSMEs.
Interaction	The level of interaction with followers is high.
	The MSME's social media account is responsive to comments from netizens.

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	Frequently conducts live streaming or creates videos in response to questions from netizens in the comments section.
Target Audience Response	I am interested in following the MSME's social media account.
	I am interested in purchasing the culinary product.
	I will not hesitate to recommend it to relatives to buy the culinary product.

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Source: processed data (2025)

The data obtained from respondents through the questionnaire will be tested for correlation using SPSS. The correlation test is conducted to determine the closeness of the relationship between the independent variable, namely the target audience response, and the dependent variables, which consist of content relevance, reputation, and interaction as dimensions of MSME branding reinforcement in the city of Surabaya. The interpretation of the correlation results is viewed from two aspects, namely the direction of the relationship (positive or negative) and the strength of the relationship (weak, moderate, or strong).

The criteria for correlation strength are as follows:

- 0.00 – 0.199 = Very low
- 0.20 – 0.399 = Low
- 0.40 – 0.599 = Moderate
- 0.60 – 0.799 = Strong
- 0.80 – 1.000 = Very strong

With these criteria, the correlation test results in this study can be used to explain the extent to which the target audience's response is related to content relevance, reputation, and interaction in strengthening MSME branding.

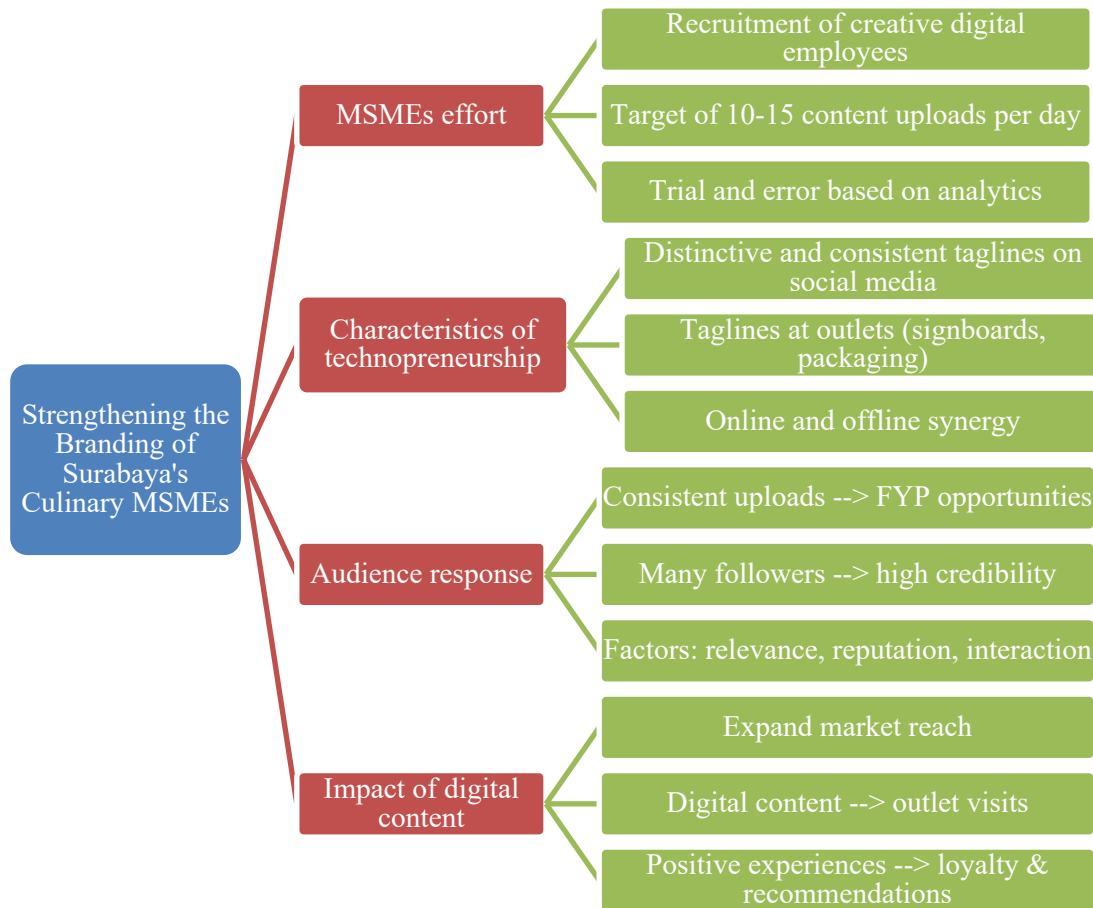
Meanwhile, a qualitative approach was conducted through in-depth interviews and observations of three MSMEs that actively create content and broadcast live on social media. This step aimed to understand the real context of how technopreneurship strategies are implemented and how audiences respond to the content and interactions.

The combination of these two methods is expected to produce more valid and rich research results, as objective quantitative data is reinforced by more contextual qualitative data. Thus, this study is able to present a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between MSME digital branding strategies and positive audience responses on social media.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

There were three MSMEs that the researcher visited to conduct interviews, with the criteria being that they were located in the city of Surabaya and were actively strengthening their branding through social media in an effort to implement technopreneurship. The results of these interviews supported the researcher's data in the qualitative method. The results of the interviews with three culinary MSMEs in the city of Surabaya can be presented in a chart, which can be seen in Figure 2.



Source: processed data (2025)

**Figure 2. Diagram of interview results with respondents**

Then, the researchers also conducted a survey of customers as supporting data regarding the target audience's response to the content created by MSMEs. The combination of these two methods is expected to provide more valid and rich research results, as objective quantitative data is reinforced by more contextual qualitative data.

Quantitative data collection through questionnaires yielded 162 respondents, consisting of 86 women and 76 men, the majority of whom reside in the Greater Surabaya area. Based on the data, the majority of respondents were in the 15-25 age range, numbering 65 people (40.1%), 26-35 years old, numbering 61 people (37.7%), above 35 years old, numbering 31 people (19.1%), and the rest were under 15 years old, numbering 5 people (3.1%). Almost all respondents (99.4%) actively use social media. Based on this data, a correlation analysis was conducted with the following results:

1. Relationship between Target Audience Response and Content Relevance

A Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the target audience's response and the relevance of content on MSMEs in the city of Surabaya.

**Table 2. Spearman's rho Correlation Test of Target Audience Response and Content Relevance**

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Strength
Target Audience Response with Content Relevance	0.411	0.000	Moderate (Significant)

Source: processed data (2025)

The correlation test results in Table 2 above show that the correlation coefficient value is 0.411 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). Based on the correlation coefficient interpretation criteria, this value falls into the moderate and significant category. Thus, it can be stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the target audience response and the relevance of content in MSMEs in Surabaya.

2. Relationship between Target Audience Response and Reputation

Spearman's correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the target audience response and reputation in MSMEs in Surabaya.

**Table 3. Spearman's rho Correlation Test of Target Audience Response and Reputation**

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Strength
Target Audience Response with Reputation	0.387	0.000	Moderate (Significant)

Source: processed data (2025)

The correlation test results in Table 3 above show that the correlation coefficient value is 0.387 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). Based on the correlation coefficient interpretation criteria, this value is classified as moderate and significant. Thus, it can be stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the target audience response and the reputation of MSMEs in Surabaya.

3. Relationship between Target Audience Response and Interaction

Spearman's correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between target audience response and interaction in MSMEs in Surabaya.

**Table 4. Spearman's rho Correlation Test of Target Audience Response and Interaction**

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Strength
Target Audience Response with Interaction	0.414	0.000	Moderate (Significant)

Source: processed data (2025)

The correlation test results in Table 4 above show that the correlation coefficient value is 0.414 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). Based on the correlation coefficient interpretation criteria, this value is classified as moderate and significant. Thus, it can be stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the target audience's response and interaction with MSMEs in Surabaya.

Then, to reinforce the validity of the results, interviews were conducted with three MSMEs regarding their awareness of the importance of strengthening branding through social media platforms. The three informants from different MSMEs generally had the same understanding. The results of the interviews with MSME actors showed that they were highly aware of the importance of utilising social media to strengthen business branding. The informants said that social media is now the main channel for introducing products and building interactions with consumers, so that its existence can no longer be seen as a complement, but rather a strategic necessity. This awareness has encouraged MSMEs to place social media management as part of their planned business strategy.

One of the MSMEs that served as a source for this study had even recruited specialised employees from the outset to manage its digital activities. These employees were tasked with creating content, setting upload schedules, and maintaining two-way communication with the audience. These efforts demonstrate the seriousness with which MSMEs manage their branding through digital platforms, not just sporadically but with a more systematic approach.

Internal support for employees focused on managing social media is also evident, whether in the form of facilities, bonuses, or a commitment to long-term development. Informants added that social media teams are motivated to continue innovating, including plans to conduct training to improve skills in creating creative content and utilising digital technology. This reflects that MSMEs not only recognise the importance of digital branding but are also actively preparing sustainable strategies to strengthen their position in the market.

Overall, these findings show that social media has become a major focus in MSME branding efforts. With social media management staff, managerial support, and future-oriented development strategies, social media is not just a promotional tool, but also a platform for building trust, expanding market reach, and increasing consumer loyalty to MSME brands.

## Discussion

Based on the data collection and analysis above, we can answer several questions that form the basis of this study.

### 1. Efforts made by culinary MSMEs in Surabaya to strengthen their business branding

The first effort made by culinary MSMEs in Surabaya to strengthen their branding is to recruit employees with relevant potential and skills. This involves not only technical skills in managing social media, but also creativity and an understanding of emerging digital trends. With a competent team, SMEs can more easily generate new ideas for their branding strategy, while maintaining consistency in conveying their brand image across various platforms. This recruitment is important to ensure that the branding strategy is not implemented sporadically, but is managed by the right human resources.

The second step is to set a target for social media teams to consistently upload 10–15 content pieces per day. This strategy aims to ensure that MSMEs are always present in their audience's timeline, thereby increasing brand awareness and strengthening their position in the minds of consumers. The uploaded content is also diverse, ranging from product photos, customer testimonials, to short videos that follow trends. Consistency in the frequency of uploads is considered important in maintaining the rhythm of communication with consumers while increasing the opportunities for interaction, so that the audience can more easily recognise and remember the brand. This finding indicates that improving digital literacy for MSMEs is crucial so that information and communication technology can be optimised to strengthen branding and drive sustainable growth (Giroth *et al.*, 2024).

In addition, culinary MSMEs also conduct trial and error efforts to find the type of content that is most preferred by the target market. This process is carried out by analysing the performance of posts, both in terms of the number of likes, comments, and other interaction levels. Business actors are not only required to be proficient in technology, but also need to be observant in reading market opportunities, developing new ideas, and turning them into products or services that have selling value (Gumilang, 2022).

It is important to understand that branding is not just about visual appearance, but also about core values that are communicated consistently. These values, when communicated through various digital channels, can create an emotional bond with the audience. For example, an SME can use social media not only for promotion, but also to build stories that are closer to consumers' daily lives (Chairil & Aisyah, 2024). Through this approach, SMEs can understand audience preferences more accurately and adjust their content strategy to be more effective. The use of analytical data provided by social media platforms allows SMEs to personalise marketing messages and target specific audience segments more effectively (Folo & Airawaty, 2024). Trial and error efforts also become a means of continuous learning, as every finding from unsuccessful content can be used as a reference to produce more targeted branding strategies in the future.

2. Characteristics of culinary SMEs in Surabaya in strengthening branding through the application of technopreneurship

One characteristic of culinary SMEs in Surabaya in strengthening branding through the application of technopreneurship is by creating a distinctive tagline that is easy for consumers to remember. This tagline is not just a slogan, but serves as a brand identity that is consistently conveyed through every piece of digital content. By utilising social media, the tagline is always included in posts, whether in the form of captions, hashtags, or visual branding on photos and videos. This strategy aims to familiarise the audience with seeing and hearing the same message, thereby forming a strong association between the tagline and the culinary products on offer. This strategy involves developing a consistent and memorable brand narrative, thereby creating a strong identity in the minds of consumers (Anggarini, 2021).

Apart from digital platforms, MSMEs also display the tagline directly at their outlets, whether on signboards, product packaging, or interior design. The presence of the tagline at outlets strengthens the consumer experience in a tangible way, as the message previously seen on social media can now be felt directly at the business location. This step reflects the application of technopreneurship that combines the power of online and offline branding, thereby creating brand image continuity. With this strategy, culinary MSMEs in Surabaya are able to build stronger customer memories while increasing consumer loyalty to the brand.

3. Target audience response to digital content related to culinary MSMEs in Surabaya strengthens MSME branding

The target audience's response was explored through informal interviews. Based on the interview, it can be seen that the target audience's response to digital content from culinary MSMEs in Surabaya shows that the more actively MSMEs produce and upload content, the greater the chance that the content will appear on the For You Page (FYP) and reach more users. The frequent appearance of content makes the audience more familiar with the brand, thereby generating interest in trying to buy the product. In addition, the number of followers also plays an important role in building trust; the more followers an account has, the higher the confidence of potential customers that the brand is trustworthy and worth trying. Thus, consistent digital activity not only strengthens branding but also influences consumer purchasing decisions.

In addition to gathering information through informal interviews, an effort to determine the relationship between the target audience's response and factors that are considered to have an influence on branding efforts carried out by MSMEs was conducted through a survey with questionnaires filled out by MSME customers. Based on the correlation test results in the results section, it can be seen that the target audience's response to MSME social media activities shows a significant relationship with the factors of content relevance, reputation, and interaction with netizens. This moderate correlation indicates that although not entirely dominant, these three variables have a significant contribution in shaping audience perceptions and attitudes. Content relevance, for example, influences the extent to which the information conveyed by MSMEs matches the needs and interests of the target market. The more accurately the content responds to consumer desires, the greater the chance that the audience will respond positively.

In addition to content relevance, reputation is also an important factor related to audience response. The positive image built by MSMEs, both through product quality and consistent communication on social media, creates trust that ultimately encourages consumer engagement. A good reputation provides a sense of security, so that the audience is more willing to follow the SME's social media accounts, try their products,

and even give supportive reviews. This shows that a consistent reputation acts as social capital that strengthens branding in the digital realm.

Interaction with netizens also has a significant influence on increasing audience engagement. Responding quickly to comments, using friendly language, and participating in social media trends makes the audience feel close and valued. The two-way relationship established through these interactions helps MSMEs build consumer loyalty, which in turn generates word-of-mouth recommendations both digitally and directly. Thus, interaction is not merely a routine activity, but a strategy to maintain sustainable relationships with the target audience.

The interconnection of these three variables in technopreneurship efforts shows that social media activities are not limited to promotion, but are a strategic means of strengthening MSME branding. With strong branding, even small businesses can have a clear position amid increasingly fierce market competition (Rafsyanjani and Fauzi, 2022). Positive responses from the audience, such as following social media accounts, making purchases, and recommending products to others, are clear evidence of the success of technopreneurs in utilising digital media. With the moderate correlation found, MSMEs are encouraged to be more consistent in improving content quality, maintaining reputation, and actively interacting so that the positive impact on branding and business growth can continue to be strengthened.

#### 4. The influence of digital content on strengthening branding for culinary MSMEs in Surabaya

Digital content plays a significant role in strengthening the branding of culinary SMEs in Surabaya, particularly in expanding market reach. Through social media, SMEs can showcase photos, videos, and compelling stories about their products, enabling potential customers who were previously unfamiliar with the brand to more easily access information. Consistent and relevant digital content not only increases brand awareness, but also encourages audiences to visit outlets in person. Thus, digital content serves as an important bridge between the online world and the offline consumer experience. Through this platform, businesses can market their products and services more effectively, while also establishing long-term relationships with customers, which ultimately strengthens their branding (Haryani and Fauzar, 2021). In fact, comparative study results show that MSMEs that adopt digital marketing can achieve an increase in revenue of up to 189% (Sussanti *et al.*, 2024).

Furthermore, when potential customers come to the outlet after seeing digital content, their first experience becomes a key factor in determining their perception of the brand. Friendly service, product quality that meets expectations, and a supportive outlet atmosphere will leave a positive impression. This impression encourages customers to return to make purchases and recommend the products to friends or family. In other words, digital content not only plays a role in attracting the attention of potential customers but also serves as the starting point for creating a cycle of consumer loyalty through positive experiences at the outlet. Through a technopreneurship approach, MSMEs can deliver a more interactive and personalised brand experience, while expanding their market reach and building consumer loyalty (Susanti *et al.*, 2024).

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## CONCLUSION

This study shows that social media plays an important role in strengthening the branding of culinary MSMEs in Surabaya. Correlation analysis shows a moderate positive relationship between target audience response and content relevance, reputation, and interaction with netizens. This means that the more appropriate the content published, the better the reputation built, and the more intense the interaction with the audience, the greater the chance for MSMEs to receive positive responses in the form of an increase in the number of followers, purchasing decisions, and recommendations from consumers.

This study has limitations in that the number of respondents was only 162 people and the majority were from Greater Surabaya, so the results may not necessarily represent the conditions of MSMEs in other areas. In addition, the questionnaire method has the potential for response bias, and the research variables only focused on content relevance, reputation, and interaction, without covering other factors such as product quality, price, or service. Recommendations for further research include expanding the number and scope of respondents, as well as adding other variables such as product quality and offline promotion strategies, so that the results are more comprehensive in describing the strengthening of MSME branding through technopreneurship.

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