

Digital Marketing Innovation And Marketing Capability Moderating Effects On Sme Sales Performance

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Digital Marketing Innovation on Sales Performance with Marketing Capability as a moderation variable in MSMEs in Kendari City. The study used a quantitative approach with the Structural Equation Modeling method based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) on 165 MSMEs selected through purposive sampling techniques. The sample criteria include MSMEs that have been operating for at least two years, actively utilizing digital media in marketing, and owners or managers are directly involved in marketing decision-making. Data was collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using SmartPLS through the evaluation of measurement models (outer model) and structural models (inner model) with bootstrapping procedures. The results of the study show that Digital Marketing Innovation does not have a significant effect directly on Sales Performance. On the other hand, Marketing Capability has a positive and significant effect on Sales Performance. In addition, Marketing Capability has been proven to positively and significantly moderate the relationship between Digital Marketing Innovation and Sales Performance, thus acting as a pure moderator. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing innovation is highly dependent on the level of marketing capabilities possessed by MSMEs. Thus, digital transformation in marketing cannot stand alone as a determining factor in sales performance, but must be supported by strong marketing capabilities to be able to generate continuous sales increases.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Innovation, Marketing Capability, Sales Performance

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh Inovasi Pemasaran Digital terhadap Kinerja Penjualan dengan Kapabilitas Pemasaran sebagai variabel moderasi pada UMKM di Kota Kendari. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode Structural Equation Modeling berbasis Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) pada 165 UMKM yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Kriteria sampel meliputi UMKM yang telah beroperasi minimal dua tahun, aktif memanfaatkan media digital dalam pemasaran, dan pemilik atau pengelola terlibat langsung dalam pengambilan keputusan pemasaran. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner skala Likert lima poin dan dianalisis menggunakan SmartPLS melalui evaluasi model pengukuran (model luar) dan model struktural (model dalam) dengan prosedur bootstrapping. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Inovasi Pemasaran Digital tidak memiliki pengaruh signifikan secara langsung terhadap Kinerja Penjualan. Di sisi lain, Kapabilitas Pemasaran memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Kinerja Penjualan. Selain itu, Kapabilitas Pemasaran terbukti memoderasi secara positif dan signifikan hubungan antara Inovasi Pemasaran Digital dan Kinerja Penjualan, sehingga bertindak sebagai moderator murni. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas inovasi pemasaran digital sangat bergantung pada tingkat kemampuan pemasaran yang dimiliki oleh UMKM. Dengan demikian, transformasi digital dalam pemasaran tidak dapat berdiri sendiri sebagai faktor penentu kinerja penjualan, tetapi harus didukung oleh kemampuan pemasaran yang kuat agar mampu menghasilkan peningkatan penjualan yang berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Inovasi Pemasaran Digital, Kemampuan Pemasaran, Kinerja Penjualan

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the global business landscape. Digitalization is no longer just an operational support tool, but rather a strategic element that

determines an organization's competitive advantage. In the context of marketing, this transformation gave birth to the concept of *digital marketing innovation*, which is the innovative use of digital technology to acquire customers, build loyalty, strengthen the brand, and improve sales performance. Various studies show that digital marketing has become the dominant paradigm in modern business growth (Shaban & Zeebaree, 2025; Antczak, 2024). The dramatically increased growth of global internet users in the last two decades has created tremendous opportunities for organizations to reach consumers broadly, measurably, and personally (Green et al., 2020). Therefore, in an increasingly digitalized competitive environment, the success of an organization is highly determined by its ability to effectively implement digital marketing innovations (Al-Ababneh, 2022; Idrysheva et al., 2019).

Digital marketing innovation includes various tools and strategies such as *search engine optimization* (SEO), *social media marketing*, *content marketing*, *email marketing*, *influencer marketing*, as well as the use of cutting-edge technologies such as *artificial intelligence* (AI), *big data analytics*, *augmented reality* (AR), and *blockchain* (Shaban & Zeebaree, 2025; Bilgihan & Ricci, 2023). The empirical literature shows that digital channels such as online advertising, email marketing, social media, and SEO have a strong positive correlation to increased sales, with significant correlation values (Idrysheva et al., 2019). These findings confirm that digital marketing innovation is not only a technological phenomenon, but a business strategy that has a direct impact on *sales performance*. Additionally, an omnichannel approach and cross-platform integration allow organizations to create a more personalized and relevant customer experience, thereby increasing conversions and *return on investment* (Antczak, 2024; Baddam, 2022).

Although various studies have confirmed the positive relationship between digital marketing innovation and sales performance, the relationship is not universal or automatic. A number of studies confirm that the impact of digital innovation on company performance is highly dependent on the organization's internal ability to manage and utilize the technology (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Herhausen et al., 2020). The *Resource-Based View* (RBV) perspective states that a company's competitive advantage is determined by resources and capabilities that are valuable, scarce, difficult to replicate, and not easily replaced. In this context, digital marketing innovation can be seen as a strategic resource, while *marketing capability* plays a role as an organizational capability that enables the conversion of digital resources into superior sales performance (Wang, 2020).

Marketing capability refers to an organization's integrative ability to apply knowledge, skills, and marketing processes to create market value (Moorman & Day, 2016). Homburg and Wielgos (2022) distinguish between *classical marketing capabilities* (CMCs) and *digital marketing capabilities* (DMCs), where DMCs have higher characteristics of scalability, interconnectivity, and adaptability than classical capabilities. Wang (2020) further conceptualized DMCs through the dimensions of *market sensing*, *customer-linking*, *customer retention*, *supplier relationship*, and *channel bonding capabilities*. These capabilities enable organizations to respond quickly and effectively to market changes, thereby amplifying the impact of digital innovation on sales.

Empirical research shows that DMCs contribute significantly to a company's profitability, even after controlling for the influence of classical marketing capabilities (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022). Zhang et al. (2025) found that digital marketing significantly improves company performance through information acquisition and absorption capabilities. These findings indicate that an organization's ability to capture and process market information is an important mechanism that bridges digital innovation and sales performance. In addition, research by Schulz et al. (2023) shows that intelligent customization capabilities mediate the relationship between digitalization and sales growth, confirming the importance of complementary capabilities in optimizing the benefits of digital innovation.

Furthermore, the current literature highlights that marketing capability not only plays a role as a mediator, but also as a moderator in the relationship between digital marketing innovation and sales performance (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Wang, 2020). The contingency perspective in RBV explains that the effectiveness of a capability is highly dependent on the existence of other capabilities that complement each other. In other words, digital marketing innovation will have a maximum impact on sales performance if supported by strong marketing capabilities. Conversely, without adequate marketing capabilities, digital investments have the potential to generate low or even insignificant returns.

Empirical evidence supports this moderation argument. Homburg and Wielgos (2022) found that the interactions between DMCs and CMCs can be complementary or substitutive depending on the organizational context and competitive environment. Wang (2020) also shows that *entrepreneurial orientation* moderates the relationship between DMCs and company performance, where companies with high entrepreneurial orientation benefit greater from digital marketing investments. This shows that marketing capabilities and organizational characteristics are decisive factors in strengthening the relationship between digital innovation and sales.

In addition to internal factors, external environments such as competition intensity and product complexity also affect the effectiveness of digital marketing innovation (Gong et al., 2024). In the context of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, companies with strong digital capabilities have proven to be more resilient and able to maintain sales performance through digital channels (Herhausen et al., 2020). Therefore, the development of marketing capabilities is a strategic priority for organizations that want to maximize the benefits of digital transformation.

Based on the synthesis of the literature, it can be concluded that the relationship between digital marketing innovation and sales performance is complex and influenced by various organizational capability factors. Digital marketing innovation provides the potential to increase market reach, personalization, cost efficiency, and conversion optimization. However, the realization of this potential is highly dependent on the level of marketing capability that the organization has. Thus, understanding the role of marketing capability as a moderator variable is crucial to explain the variation in the impact of digital marketing innovation on sales performance in various organizational contexts.

This research seeks to develop a conceptual framework that places marketing capability as a moderator in the relationship between digital marketing innovation and sales performance. By integrating the perspective of RBV and *dynamic capabilities*, this study makes a theoretical contribution in elucidating the contingency mechanisms that explain the success of digital transformation in improving sales performance. In addition, practically, this research provides strategic implications for managers to not only invest in digital technology, but also build strong marketing capabilities to ensure that digital innovations actually result in continuous sales performance improvements.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with the Structural Equation Modeling method based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to test the influence of Digital Marketing Innovation on Sales Performance with Marketing Capability as a moderation variable in 165 MSMEs in Kendari City. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling with the criteria of MSMEs that have been operating for at least two years, actively utilizing digital media such as social media, marketplaces, or websites in marketing activities, and owners or managers are directly involved in marketing decision-making. Primary data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions of each research construct. The analysis process was carried out using SmartPLS software through two main stages, namely the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to ensure the validity of the convergence, the validity of the discriminant, and the reliability of the construct, and the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) with a bootstrapping procedure to test the significance of the path coefficient and the strength of the moderation effect. The SEM-PLS method was chosen because it is able to analyze complex causality relationships simultaneously, remains robust at moderate sample sizes, and has good predictive ability in explaining variations in MSME sales performance.

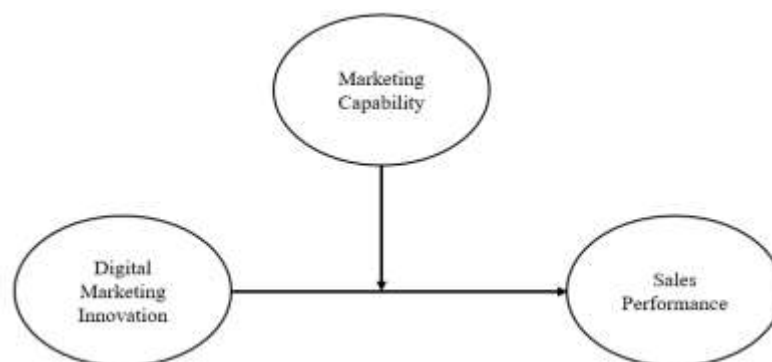


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study involved 165 respondents who are owners or managers of MSMEs in Kendari City with diverse demographic characteristics. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were women

as many as 95 people (57.6%), while men as many as 70 people (42.4%). In terms of age, most of the respondents were in the age range of 31-40 years, namely 72 people (43.6%), followed by the age group of 20-30 years as many as 48 people (29.1%), the age group of 41-50 years as many as 33 people (20%), and the remaining 12 people (7.3%) aged over 50 years. Based on the level of education, the majority of respondents had a Bachelor's (S1) educational background as many as 82 people (49.7%), followed by 60 high school graduates/equivalent (36.4%), and Diploma (D3) as many as 15 people (9.1%), and Postgraduate (S2) as many as 8 people (4.8%). In terms of business age, most MSMEs have been operating for 5-10 years, namely 68 units (41.2%), followed by businesses with an operational period of 2-5 years as many as 54 units (32.7%), and businesses that have been running for more than 10 years as many as 43 units (26.1%). Based on the type of business, the majority of respondents were engaged in the culinary sector as many as 74 MSMEs (44.8%), followed by the trade/fashion sector as many as 46 MSMEs (27.9%), the service sector as many as 28 MSMEs (17%), and the handicraft sector and others as many as 17 MSMEs (10.3%). This characteristic shows that the survey respondents represent various demographic backgrounds and types of businesses, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the condition of MSMEs in Kendari City in implementing digital marketing innovation to improve sales performance.

Table 1. Results of the Measurement Model

Variables	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Digital Marketing Innovation	X.1	0,938	0,955	0,955	0,846
	X.2	0,926			
	X.3	0,902			
	X.4	0,923			
	X.5	0,912			
Sales Performance	Y.1	0,937	0,962	0,961	0,866
	Y.2	0,925			
	Y.3	0,907			
	Y.4	0,945			
	Y.5	0,941			
Marketing Capability	M.1	0,922	0,946	0,956	0,820
	M.2	0,897			
	M.3	0,922			
	M.4	0,877			
	M.5	0,911			

Based on the results of the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) in Table 1, all constructs in this study show a very good level of validity and reliability. The loading factor value for each indicator in the Digital Marketing Innovation, Sales Performance, and Marketing Capability variables is above 0.70, and even most of them exceed 0.90, which indicates that all items have a strong convergent validity and are able to reflect the measured construct optimally. The Digital Marketing Innovation variable has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.955, Composite Reliability of 0.955, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.846, indicating a very high level of internal consistency and

construct reliability. Similarly, the Sales Performance variable shows Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.962, Composite Reliability of 0.961, and AVE of 0.866, indicating that this construct is very reliable and has the ability to explain the variance of indicators very well. Meanwhile, the Marketing Capability variable also showed Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.946, Composite Reliability of 0.956, and AVE of 0.820, all of which have exceeded the recommended minimum limits (0.70 for reliability and 0.50 for AVE).

Table 2. HTMT result

	1	2	3	4
Digital Marketing Innovation (1)	0,906			
Marketing Capability (2)	0,380	0,920		
Sales Performance (3)	0,352	0,760	0,931	

Based on the results of the discriminant validity test using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criteria in Table 2, all constructs in this study meet the requirements for good discriminant validity. The HTMT value between Digital Marketing Innovation and Marketing Capability is 0.380, between Digital Marketing Innovation and Sales Performance is 0.352, and between Marketing Capability and Sales Performance is 0.760. All of these values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (even more strictly 0.85), so it can be concluded that each construct has an adequate degree of discrimination and actually measures concepts that differ from each other. In addition, the higher diagonal values on each construct (0.906; 0.920; 0.931) indicate a strong internal consistency compared to the correlation between constructs. Thus, the results of this HTMT test confirm that the measurement model has met the criteria of discriminant validity, so that the analysis can be continued at the stage of structural model evaluation to test the relationship between variables in the study.

Table 3. R-Square

	R-square
Sales Performance	0,705

Based on the results of the structural model test in Table 3, the R-square (R²) value for the Sales Performance variable is 0.705. This value shows that 70.5% variation in Sales Performance can be explained by the variables Digital Marketing Innovation and Marketing Capability in the research model. Meanwhile, the remaining 29.5% was influenced by other variables outside the model that were not studied in this study. According to the evaluation criteria in SEM-PLS, the R² value of 0.705 is included in the strong (substantial) category, because it exceeds the threshold of 0.67 which indicates the model's high predictive ability. These results indicate that the combination of Digital Marketing Innovation and Marketing Capability has a significant contribution in explaining the improvement of MSME sales performance in Kendari City. Thus, the structural model developed in this study has a good and relevant descriptive power to explain the phenomenon being studied

Table 4. Hypotheses relationship testing

	Original sample	T statistics	P values
Digital Marketing Innovation -> Sales Performance	0,082	1,604	0,109

Marketing Capability -> Sales Performance	0,300	2,483	0,013
Marketing Capability x Digital Marketing Innovation -> Sales Performance	0,143	2,854	0,004

Based on the results of testing the relationship between variables in Table 4, an overview of the direct influence and effect of moderation in the research model was obtained. The relationship between Digital Marketing Innovation and Sales Performance showed a path coefficient value (original sample) of 0.082 with a T-statistical value of 1.604 and a P-value of 0.109. Since the P value is greater than 0.05, this relationship is declared to be statistically insignificant. This shows that directly, Digital Marketing Innovation has not been able to have a significant influence on improving the Sales Performance of MSMEs in Kendari City. In other words, the implementation of digital marketing innovations alone does not necessarily automatically improve sales performance without other supporting factors.

On the other hand, the test results showed that Marketing Capability had a positive and significant effect on Sales Performance, with a coefficient value of 0.300, T-statistics of 2.483, and P-values of 0.013 (< 0.05). These findings indicate that the higher the marketing skills possessed by MSMEs such as the ability to read the market, manage customer relationships, and integrate distribution channels, the higher the sales performance achieved. Marketing Capability has proven to be an internal factor that plays an important role in improving competitiveness and business performance.

Furthermore, the results of the interaction effect test showed that the variable Marketing Capability x Digital Marketing Innovation had a coefficient of 0.143, with a T-statistic of 2.854 and a P-value of 0.004 (< 0.05). These results show that the effect of moderation is positive and significant, which means that Marketing Capability is able to strengthen the relationship between Digital Marketing Innovation and Sales Performance. Thus, although the direct influence of Digital Marketing Innovation is insignificant, when combined with high Marketing Capability, it becomes stronger and more meaningful.

These findings indicate that Marketing Capability plays a role as a pure moderator, because this variable has a significant direct influence on Sales Performance while strengthening the relationship between Digital Marketing Innovation and Sales Performance. This means that the effectiveness of digital marketing innovation is highly dependent on the level of marketing ability possessed by MSMEs. MSMEs that have high marketing capabilities will be better able to optimize the use of digital technology to increase sales compared to MSMEs with low capabilities.

Overall, the results of this hypothesis test confirm that digital transformation in marketing cannot stand alone as a determining factor in sales performance. The success of the implementation of Digital Marketing Innovation is highly determined by the organization's internal readiness and ability to manage marketing strategies effectively. Therefore, strengthening Marketing Capability is a key strategy for MSMEs in Kendari City so that the digital marketing innovations implemented are really able to produce significant and sustainable sales performance improvements.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the direct influence of Digital Marketing Innovation on Sales Performance is not significant, although theoretically previous studies have stated that there is a positive relationship between the two. The literature confirms that digital marketing—through SEO, social media marketing, email marketing, and content marketing—has a strong correlation with increased sales (Idrysheva et al., 2019; Antczak, 2024). In addition, digital innovation allows companies to reach consumers broadly and personally amid the growth of global internet users (Green et al., 2020; Shaban & Zeebaree, 2025). However, the findings of this study indicate that in the context of MSMEs in Kendari City, the adoption of digital innovation alone is not enough to directly improve sales performance. This is in line with the view that digital transformation is not just the implementation of technology, but requires organizational readiness and adequate management skills (Herhausen et al., 2020).

The insignificance of these direct influences can be explained through the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV) which emphasizes the importance of internal capabilities in transforming resources into superior performance (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Wang, 2020). Digital marketing innovation is a strategic resource, but without the ability of organizations to manage marketing strategies, interpret consumer data, and integrate various communication channels, the potential of digital technology cannot be optimized. Zhang et al. (2025) also emphasized that the impact of digital marketing on company performance is often mediated by information acquisition and absorption capabilities. Thus, the results of this study strengthen the argument that digital innovation does not work automatically, but rather depends on the quality of marketing capabilities that organizations have.

On the other hand, the results of the study show that Marketing Capability has a positive and significant effect on Sales Performance. These findings are consistent with the literature that states that both classical and digital marketing capabilities are the main determinants of a company's performance (Moorman & Day, 2016; Homburg & Wielgos, 2022). Wang (2020) explained that market sensing, customer-linking, and channel bonding capabilities allow companies to respond to market changes quickly and effectively. In the context of MSMEs, the ability to understand customer needs, maintain long-term relationships, and manage distribution channels is a crucial factor in increasing sales volume and profitability. In other words, marketing capabilities serve as the foundation that ensures that marketing strategies run effectively and in a targeted manner.

Furthermore, this study found that Marketing Capability significantly moderates the relationship between Digital Marketing Innovation and Sales Performance. The positive interaction effect shows that the higher the marketing capability, the stronger the influence of digital innovation on sales performance. These findings are in line with the research of Homburg and Wielgos (2022) which shows the potential for complementarity between digital marketing capabilities and classical marketing capabilities. In the perspective of dynamic capabilities, organizations that have adaptive and responsive capabilities to technological changes will be better able to utilize digital innovations to create market

value (Herhausen et al., 2020). Thus, marketing capability acts as an amplifier of the impact of digital innovation.

The implications of these findings are also aligned with studies of the e-commerce and SME sectors that emphasize the importance of multi-channel integration and data-driven approaches in increasing conversions and ROI (Shaban & Zeebaree, 2025; Erdmann & Ponzoa, 2021). Digital marketing innovations such as the use of AI for personalization, social media engagement, and creative content marketing will have a significant impact if supported by good analytical skills, customer management, and performance management (Baddam, 2022; Antczak, 2024). Therefore, MSMEs that only focus on using digital platforms without strengthening marketing competencies risk not getting the optimal benefits from their digital investments. Overall, this discussion emphasizes that the relationship between digital marketing innovation and sales performance is contingent and depends on the level of marketing capability that the organization has. These findings enrich the literature by showing that in the context of MSMEs, marketing capabilities are an important prerequisite for converting digital innovations into real sales increases. Therefore, MSME development strategies need to focus not only on technology digitalization, but also on strengthening marketing competencies, data-based training, and the integration of omnichannel strategies. This holistic approach will enable MSMEs to achieve sustainable sales performance in the digital economy era.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that Digital Marketing Innovation does not have a significant direct effect on the Sales Performance of MSMEs in Kendari City. This shows that the application of technology and digital platforms alone is not enough to automatically improve sales performance. On the other hand, Marketing Capability has been proven to have a positive and significant influence on Sales Performance, and acts as a pure moderator that strengthens the relationship between Digital Marketing Innovation and Sales Performance. Thus, the effectiveness of digital marketing innovation is highly dependent on the internal ability of MSMEs to read the market, manage customer relationships, and strategically integrate various marketing channels. The practical implication of these findings is that MSME actors and policymakers not only need to encourage the adoption of digital technology, but also must prioritize improving marketing competencies through training, mentoring, and strengthening data-driven strategies so that digital transformation truly impacts sustainable sales increases.

This study has several limitations, including the number of samples that is limited to 165 MSMEs in Kendari City, so generalization of research results to other regions needs to be done carefully. In addition, this study only tested one moderation variable, namely Marketing Capability, without considering other factors such as entrepreneurial orientation, competition intensity, digital literacy, or technological support that may also affect the relationship between variables. Further research is suggested to expand the scope of regions and industry sectors, add other mediation or

moderation variables, and use a longitudinal approach to look at the impact of digital marketing innovations in the long term. Thus, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between Digital Marketing Innovation, Marketing Capability, and Sales Performance in the context of MSMEs and broader organizations.

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