

The Importance of Brand Orientation to the Business Strategy of Small and Medium Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how adopting social media and e-commerce can improve business strategies and have implications for increasing the revenue of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The researchers conducted a study with 110 respondents of small and medium enterprises in Indonesia using two stages of analysis, namely a measurement model to assess validity and reliability and a structural model to test the hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that social media and e-commerce have a significant impact on business strategies. This finding suggests that social media and e-commerce platforms increase visibility and access to a wider market and enable more personalized interactions with customers, optimization of marketing strategies, and operational efficiency. Other findings suggest that brand orientation can strengthen the influence of social media and e-commerce adoption on business strategies. Brand orientation is crucial in strengthening the relationship between social media and e-commerce adoption in SME business strategies. By focusing on brand orientation, SMEs can create a consistent and attractive identity across digital platforms, increasing consumer awareness and brand loyalty.

Keywords: Social Media and E-Commerce Adoption, Brand Orientation, Business Strategy, Small and Medium Enterprises

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INTRODUCTION

A business environment in tune with current technological developments is a major concern for executives in developing business strategies (Ilmudeen, Bao, & Alharbi, 2019). As communication and transactions shifted from traditional to digital, many businesses have adopted it into their business processes (Abed, 2020). Many businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) find it difficult to adopt the digital way due to a lack of knowledge, training, and skills (Qalati, Li, Ahmed, Mirani, & Khan, 2021). Meanwhile, they dominate the number of business actors who can contribute to improving a country's welfare. Especially in developing countries, SMEs play an important role in overcoming rural disparities, poverty barriers, inequality and creating jobs (Tambunan, 2019). This raises the question of how to utilize digital mechanisms to increase sales. An easy and inexpensive way to do this is to adopt social media and e-commerce into the business. They can innovate to improve the company's overall performance (Oyewobi, Adedayo, Olorunyomi, & Jimoh, 2022) so that it can be seen to what extent social media marketing is used in marketing strategy as a strategic goal and performance evaluation (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

Previous research has confirmed that when SMEs can adopt social media and e-commerce into their business, it can minimize risks and have a relationship to the formation of business strategies. However, previous literature did not pay attention to other antecedents in influencing their influence. One of them is the important role of brand orientation as a strategic planning method to conduct an effective marketing strategy (Hoang Tien, Phung Phu, Thi Phuong Chi Ho Chi, & Thi Phuong Chi, 2019). Companies with a high level of brand orientation will perform better than companies with a lower level of brand orientation (Odoom, 2016). This successful method is used by SMEs in developed countries such as England and China who use brand management capabilities to improve marketing performance and customer relations (G. Cao & Weerawardena, 2023; Sayal & Banerjee, 2022). This proved that the importance of a brand in strategic planning cannot be ignored (Heinberg, Katsikeas, Ozkaya, & Taube, 2019) also explained that brands have important implications for business strategy.

Based on this, we tested and investigated not only how the adoption of social media and e-commerce affects business strategy, but how brand

orientation affects the relationship between the two. This research will enhance the ways that SMEs can develop business strategies (Alzahrani, 2019). It also examined the moderating relationship between these two variables which focussed on consumers, IT usage, new markets, and competitive advantages. Testing on brand orientation is still neglected as an antecedent in strengthening the relationship between the two. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effect of social media and e-commerce adoption on business strategy and see the influence of brand orientation in strengthening the relationship between the two. Therefore, it can be used as a good strategic business planning model for marketing products digitally.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media, E-Commerce Adoption, and Business Strategy

Although Indonesian MEs have adopted social media and e-commerce technology, the lack of access to knowledge on how to optimize it effectively has an impact on the ineffectiveness of its use in business (Hersusetiyati & Chandra, 2024). They just use it without understanding how to optimize the technology so that it can have many benefits for the business. Social media adoption is using various social media platforms for specific purposes, especially business, as an alternative to improving the capabilities of business processes (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021). Social media has been widely adopted to access consumer information and build customer relationships (Qalati et al., 2021). Especially in marketing activities, social media is used to facilitate and help create closer relationships with consumers and other stakeholders (Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside, & Mercieca, 2020). Social media offers many advantages if adopted as a business instrument because it is very suitable for digital development.

These developments must be matched by innovative and proactive strategies aligned with market actions and the company's resources (Kristinae, Wardana, Giantari, & Rahyuda, 2020). The business strategy shows how companies place themselves in the market to adapt to the dynamics of the business environment through the actions and choices taken by the company to produce high performance (Porter, 1980). The company's business strategy will primarily determine the success of a

company's competition in the market. A business strategy's success can be influenced by forming a positive consumer community network through social media (Mason, Narcum, & Mason, 2021). Digitalization can help companies develop effective promotional campaigns through various social media platforms as part of the company's business strategy to improve brand image and consumer product purchases (Kumar, Dhir, Talwar, Chakraborty, & Kaur, 2021). A significant increase in the use of social media will increase the chances of success of the company's business strategy in the digital era.

Social media adoption is a resource that can be utilized by a business when formulating its business strategy to create a competitive advantage (Coy, Shipley, & Omer, 2007). Social media plays a vital role in developing the company's business strategy. Furthermore, social media adoption can be used by companies to gather external knowledge related to process or market analysis, development of ideas through brainstorming, determination of cooperation, and formation of informal networks or crowdsourcing to improve the company's business strategy capabilities (Barlatier & Mention, 2020). In addition, companies often adopt social media for innovation and targeting purposes to develop strategic business outcomes (Aronica, Bonfanti, & Piacentino, 2021) in which company growth is in line with the achievement of the company's business strategy. The opportunity for businesses to adopt social media is crucial for escalating the company's business strategy to increase the value of the business being run (Puriwat & Tripopasakul, 2021). Not only is social media widely used by business people today, but e-commerce websites are widely used to help increase sales.

E-commerce is selling or buying goods or services over the Internet with a method specifically designed to receive or send orders (Cassia & Magno, 2022). Many people have used e-commerce to run online businesses (Oudan, 2010). So, e-commerce can be defined as an application that becomes an information technology solution to help define and develop new strategies for overcoming business problems (Ofori, Leong, & Pin, 2002). E-commerce includes product catalogs, product promotion, ordering, and online payment. In addition, e-commerce also facilitates sellers' online access, electronic procurement, participation in electronic marketplaces, and electronic fulfillment (Gregory, Karavdic, & Zou, 2007). Implementing e-commerce in a business can provide innovative options and additional channels to enter different markets and expand its services, even to other

countries. To grow further and gain more influence, SMEs worldwide are turning to the application of innovative approaches by adopting the application of e-commerce to their business as one of its innovative approaches (Qi, Chan, Hu, & Li, 2020). Implementing e-commerce in the business is a huge opportunity to develop its business further.

E-commerce continues to grow every year in various developed countries. Analysts recently predicted that its market penetration will increase to 25% by 2026 (Mohamad, Hassan, & Abd Elrahman, 2022). This trend has grown since the pandemic, signaling a substantial change in consumer purchasing behavior, with many online purchases (Bhatti et al., 2020). E-commerce competition is increasing in line with its growth. The intensity of e-commerce usage is expected to be maintained (Xiao, Guo, Yu, & Liu, 2019). Nowadays, e-commerce has been a part of international business for about two decades, but it has not yet penetrated all geographical areas and all walks of life. People think of “e-commerce” only as buying and selling goods online, but it encompasses a more comprehensive range of systems and processes (Alzahrani, 2019). This is because e-commerce allows a business to reach its customers anywhere. Thus, a company must change its strategic planning to prepare its business strategy (Oudan, 2010).

H1: Social Media and E-Commerce Adoption have a positive and significant effect on Business Strategy

Moderation Brand Orientation

Brand orientation is an identity that becomes part of the company’s marketing relationship with the collectivity of orientation to improve business performance. Businesses that build brand orientation well and maintain brand strategic consistency for a long time will achieve a different competitive advantage from their competitors (Piha et al., 2021). The difference in the excellence of the business will affect the company’s market share. The company’s ability to enhance its brand can protect the company’s innovation from being imitated by competitors and can quickly respond to market changes more efficiently (Lei, Ye, & Abimbola, 2013). When viewed from the perspective of the brand, the brand becomes an external factor that moderates the relationship between brand orientation and company performance (Hirvonen, Laukkanen, & Reijonen, 2013).

Significantly, brand orientation can help companies optimize their business performance offline and online through appropriate branding efforts, which can positively impact sales (Tajeddini & Ratten, 2017). The power of digitalization makes it easier for companies to deliver brand orientation messages to consumers. Social media as a digital communication channel is used intensely by businesses in their digital marketing strategy to show their brand orientation to consumers and to characterize the superiority of the company's brand orientation from that of other competitors (Voorveld, 2019). In addition, digital technology platforms such as e-commerce are utilized to build good brand equity by using capabilities, integration, and personal experiences that participate in brand-building by playing a designated role and interacting with consumers directly (Li, Shi, Wang, & Xia, 2023). This increasingly fierce business competition, especially online businesses, requires companies to create a strategically planned brand orientation to remain competitive, so the importance of brand orientation for businesses continues to increase over time (Ghobehei, Sadeghvaziri, Ebrahimi, & Bakeshloo, 2019).

Previous studies have shown that brand orientation can be used as a moderator to strengthen the relationship between Inter-Firm Market Orientation (IFMO) and performance in marketing and finance. Results have shown that the marketing and financial performance of inter-firm markets will be significant if the role of brand orientation is good so that the performance of marketing and finance increases (Tajeddini & Ratten, 2017). We used the role of brand orientation as moderator to test whether brand orientation strengthens the relationship between social media adoption and business strategy and the relationship between e-commerce and business strategy.

H2: Brand Orientation strengthens the Influence of Social Media Adoption on Business Strategy

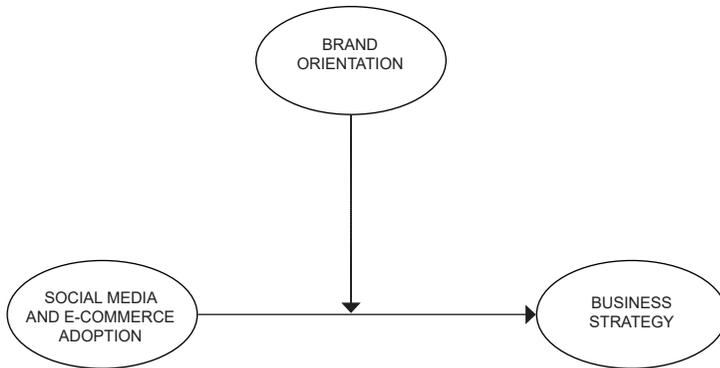


Figure 1: Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

The research data was collected online from January to July 2023. Researchers distributed questionnaires to SMEs that had adopted social media and e-commerce in their business processes. 120 questionnaires were obtained, but only 110 were used for data normality. A total of 17 question items were asked of the respondents. The questions were related to how the company adopted social media and e-commerce in its business processes. The question items were scored using a 5-point Likert scale, point 1 representing “strongly disagree”, point 2 representing “disagree”, point three representing “neutral”, point 4 representing “agree, and point 5 representing “strongly agree”, and questionnaires collected by the respondents were checked for completeness so that the respondents’ responses to this questionnaire could be verified. Social media and e-commerce question items were adopted from (Shi, Nyedu, Huang, & Lovia, 2022), business strategy was adopted from (Ahmad, Abu Bakar, & Ahmad, 2018), and brand orientation was adopted from (Odoom & Mensah, 2019). The purposive sampling method was used to help facilitate obtaining statistical significance. Purposive sampling is helpful in small quantitative studies to ensure that the data generated is relevant to the study objectives (Campbell et al., 2020; Klar & Leeper, 2019). This sampling was aimed at respondents with specific criteria or characteristics relevant to this research

to avoid the risk of severe impacts experienced during the data collection and processing process (Andrade, 2021).

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics

Measures	Items	Frequency (respondent)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	62	56.4 %
	Female	48	43.6 %
Age	16 – 25	21	19.1 %
	26 – 35	62	56.4 %
	> 36	27	24.5 %
Education	High School	15	13.6 %
	Undergraduate	42	38.2 %
	Master's	47	42.7 %
	Doctor's	6	5.5 %
Type of Company	Retail	10	9.1 %
	Manufacturers	8	7.3 %
	Fashion	32	29.1 %
	Service	60	54.5 %

The characteristics of the respondents were grouped based on several categories as shown in Table 1. A total of (56.4%) were male, while women were 43.6%, so the majority of the respondents were male. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 16 to 25 years old (19.1%), 26-35 years old (56.4%), and >35 years old (24.5%). Respondent data was collected and analyzed using a structural equation modelling approach using AMOS 24 through two stages: the measurement and structural models. The measurement model looked at the validity and reliability of research data, and a structural model was carried out by looking at the influence of the research variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of Measurement Models

The first step was to ensure that the data was normally distributed and that there were no outliers. We used the z-score criteria obtained from SPSS with a value of ± 1.96 significant at $P < 0.05$, at ± 2.58 significant at $P < 0.01$. All values showed results according to the expected criteria, so the data was normally distributed. Furthermore, validity and reliability were

assessed through the measurement model as shown in Table 2. All loading factors > 0.5 were continued by looking at validity with average variance extracted (AVE) criteria > 0.5 and reliability testing by looking at composite reliability > 0.7 (Hair, Babin, & Krey, 2017).

Table 2: Measurement Model Evaluation

Construct	Items	Loading Factor	AVE	CR
Social Media and E-Commerce Adoption (Shi et al., 2022)	I intend to continue using SME in the future (or keep using it).	0.809	0.70	0.94
	I predict I will use SME in the upcoming months.	0.745		
	I think SME is an important mechanism to run my business	0.873		
	I will always try to use social media and e-commerce in my daily life	0.911		
	I plan to continue to use social media and e-commerce frequently	0.833		
Business strategy (Ahmad et al., 2018)	There was an increase in sales when I utilized social media and e-commerce	0.857	0.76	1.0
	I can reach more potential customers when I utilize social media and e-commerce	0.924		
	Able to increase positive feedback from our products	0.859		
	We can promote good service quality to customers	0.887		
	Social media and e-commerce can increase consumer awareness of our products/brands online	0.856		
	Interact with customers much faster	0.884		
	We can improve customer relationship management	0.894		
	We can improve customer service	0.81		
Brand orientation (Odoom & Mensah, 2019)	Our brand(s) is/are an important asset for us	0.814	0.67	0.89
	Branding is essential in running our enterprise	0.564		
	Branding flows through all our marketing activities	0.936		
	Branding is essential to our strategy	0.91		

After testing the validity and reliability as required, we tested the direct effect of social media and e-commerce adoption variables on business strategy. The results showed that it can have a positive and significant impact with an estimated 0.77, p-value <0.05. These results mean that the better business actors can adopt social media and e-commerce, the more influential the business strategy will be. These results supported (Alzahrani, 2019).

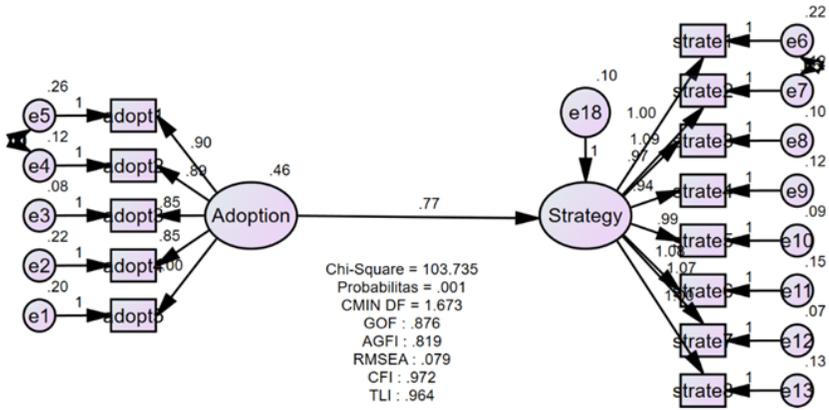


Figure 2: Direct Effect

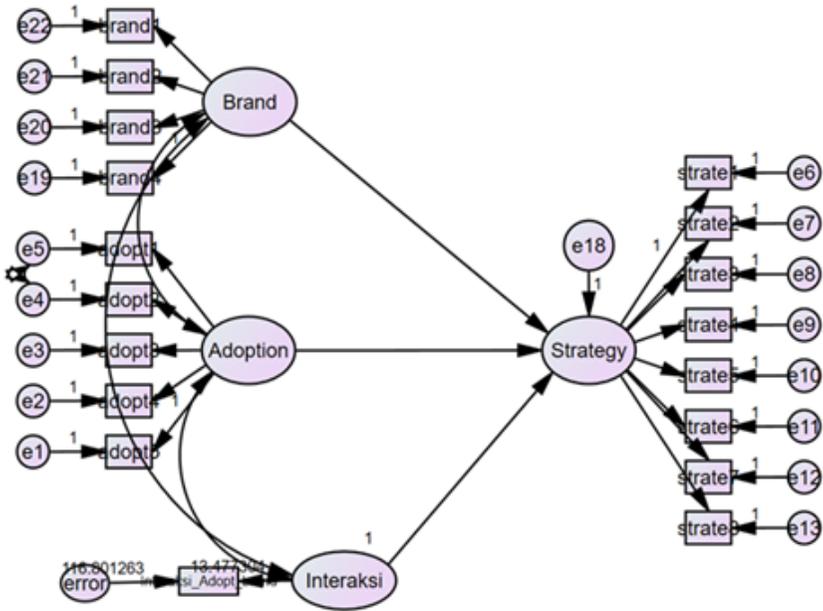


Figure 3: Interaction Moderation

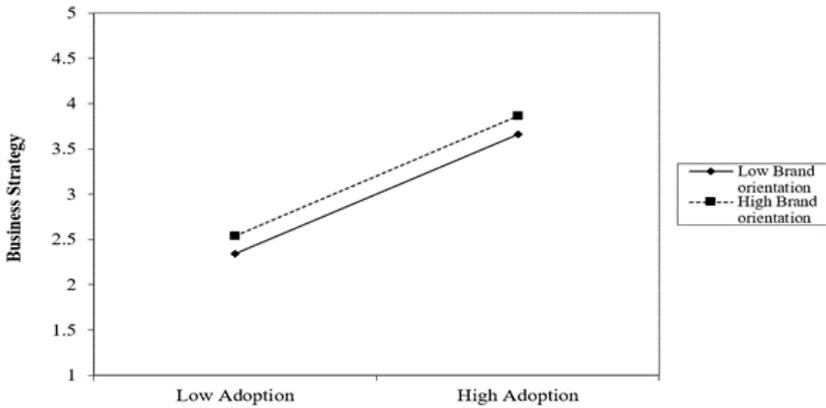


Figure 4: Moderation Effect

Furthermore, we tested the moderating effect of brand orientation on the relationship between social media and e-commerce adoption on business strategy. The results showed that brand orientation strengthened the relationship between the two variables. The interaction value was used to see the moderation relationship with an estimated value of 0.003, as shown in Figure 3. This meant that the higher the value of brand orientation owned, the stronger the relationship between social media and e-commerce adoption to business strategy. We also used the depiction of the moderating effect of (Dawson, 2023) to make it easier to see the moderating role. As shown in Figure 4. the moderating role was in a positive direction and verified the model fit index and conformity with the assessment criteria (Tabachenik & Fidel, 2012). The data collected showed that the proposed research model was a considerable fit.

Table 3: Goodness of Fit Moderation Effect

Index Goodness of Fit Model	Recommended Value	Structural Model Results	Result
Chi- square (χ^2)/CMIN		189.302	Fit
CMIN/Df	$2 \leq \text{Normed } \chi^2 \leq 5$	0.000	Fit
GOF	$\geq 0,90$	0.866	Fit
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.75	Fit
CFI	$\geq 0,90$	0.970	Fit
TLI	$\geq 0,90$	0.961	Fit

Business people widely use social media and e-commerce to develop their business strategies. Social media is used to disseminate information related to the business they run, build relationships with their consumers, manage the communities they make, and as an effective communication tool to interact with their consumers. The results of this study showed that when SMEs adopted social media and e-commerce, the results of the business strategies they planned can be improved. These results are supported by previous research (Ainin, Parveen, Moghavvemi, Jaafar, & Shuib, 2015; Y. Cao, Ajjan, Hong, & Le, 2018; Pourkhani, Abdipour, Baher, & Moslehpour, 2019; Sengar, 2021; Tajvidi & Karami, 2017). When you can maximize social media, you can improve business performance. Not only social media, those who can adopt e-commerce into their business can also enhance the performance of the business strategy. E-commerce adoption is used to develop a business strategy because businesses that use e-commerce can help increase market share, operational efficiency, competitiveness, and competitive advantage.

This research also showed that brand orientation can help companies strengthen their business strategy by adopting social media, especially in their marketing strategy. For example, companies that want to increase sales and reach more potential customers can adopt social media to promote and advertise their products or services. Involvement in brand orientation needs to be considered in the company's strategy to make it easier for the company to achieve the objectives of the advertisement and promotion. Brand orientation can be an essential factor in the success of a company's business strategy, especially in maximizing the potential of social media adoption, which impacts improving the company's marketing performance (Tajeddini & Ratten, 2017).

Social media and e-commerce adoption improve business performance by increasing consumer awareness of the company's products and help improve the performance of the business strategy. Brand orientation is an essential asset in running the company, so the more aware consumers are of the product through e-commerce and social media adoption, the more likely the company's profit will increase and the success of the company's business strategy. Sustainable business is the result of the success of the company's strategy. The adoption of e-commerce, supported by the involvement of brand orientation in the company's business strategy, is a strength for the company to achieve success (Yacob, Sulistiyo, Erida, & Siregar, 2021).

Practical Implications

This study provides two important implications for practice. First, our results identify a must-have capability for SMEs to adopt social media and e-commerce into their business processes. It has been proven that maximizing these two platforms can help improve their business strategy, which has implications for increasing sales. If they do not have these capabilities, they can recruit employees specifically to use these platforms, especially millennials, who are very easy and quick to understand in adopting and updating information about fast-changing technology. Through social media and e-commerce, they can also reach a broader market and new markets. Another important thing is that they can communicate with consumers and get direct feedback for input and evaluation of products or services provided to their consumers.

The second important thing is the critical role of brand orientation, which can strengthen the influence of social media and e-commerce adoption on business strategy. All activities carried out in digital business must be brand-oriented. The brand becomes a company asset that must be improved. One way to do this is by branding on social media and e-commerce. Especially on social media, which is not a selling platform, can be maximized to increase brand awareness. Companies with high brand value to consumers will quickly search for products through social media and e-commerce.

Brands can provide a consistent recognition identity and enable building customer trust and loyalty more effectively (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022). They can quickly identify the brand through social media by searching for keywords. When they have a strong brand, it can also enable business reputation management to be more effective. For example, in the event of negative comments or reviews from consumers, a strong brand will have a more solid foundation to address the issue by making it an improvement. A strong brand can also facilitate collaboration with potential partners or influencers on social media. Of course, they will be more willing to work with brands with a good reputation because it will align with their values. In the end, a strong brand can help managers strategize the steps of the planned business strategy to get the best results.

CONCLUSION

The formation of business strategies in SMEs by adopting social media and e-commerce shows innovation in adapting to changes in the digital business environment. The power of digitalization in business strategy helps SMEs to have a competitive advantage so that businesses can survive in the industry. This study provides results showing that adopting social media and e-commerce will improve the quality of business strategies formulated by SMEs and help marketers formulate business strategies that support business success in the digital era. This study sought to enhance previous research by adding brand orientation as a moderating variable to the relationship between the adoption of social media and e-commerce in business strategy. The role of brand orientation in adopting social media and e-commerce is to increase the success of business strategies used by SMEs. In formulating an effective business strategy, brand orientation is a variable that needs to be considered by every marketer because brand awareness from consumers will increase the success of business strategies implemented by SMEs. So, the existence of brand orientation will improve business performance if included in forming SME business strategies through the adoption of social media and e-commerce. Previous research has only focused on the direct impact of the adoption of social media and e-commerce on business performance without considering the role of branding elements as a reinforcement in the process. By adding brand orientation as a moderating variable, this study provides a new, more holistic perspective on how brand awareness can be a catalyst in optimizing digital-based strategies. This approach explains that the success of a business strategy depends not only on the utilization of technology but also on the ability of SMEs to build and utilize their brands as strategic assets. In this context, brand orientation increases competitiveness by strengthening brand image, building customer loyalty, and creating unique added value in a competitive market. This study not only fills the theoretical gap on the role of brand orientation in SME digital strategy but also provides a practical contribution by offering guidance for integrating branding into social media and e-commerce adoption. This provides a strong foundation for SMEs to develop more effective, relevant, and challenging business strategies in the ever-evolving digital business landscape.

Finally, business strategies formed through social media and e-commerce adoption by SMEs have positive implications for improving

business strategy performance. Then, the important role of brand orientation in the relationship between social media and e-commerce adoption helps SMEs succeed in business strategies because by focusing on brand orientation, consumers will be more aware of the brands owned by the company. The effectiveness of social media and e-commerce adoption in business strategy will show significant results for business. Thus, this study will help both theoretically and practically to formulate business strategies through the adoption of social media and e-commerce and pay attention to brand orientation as a supporting factor for the strategy's success.

This research has several limitations that can be used for future studies. First, this study used respondents from SMEs in Indonesia. The data collected may only be a simple picture. They still cannot describe the contribution of social media adoption and e-commerce to business strategy in larger companies and with different country cultures. Future research can use companies no longer at the SME level and respondents in other countries for more precise model applications. Second, this study only used brand orientation moderation as an additional antecedent. It opens up opportunities for future research to test other moderating variables that can be used to optimize business strategy. Third, this research used a quantitative approach, which needs improvement because it cannot get information directly from respondents. Future research can use a qualitative approach to test the similarity of the results in the quantitative approach.

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