



# Marketing Communication Trends in MSMEs and Their Implications for Consumer Behavior: A Systematic Literature Review (2015–2025)

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**Abstract:** Digital marketing communications have undergone a fundamental transformation that has encouraged micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to adopt new approaches in reaching and retaining consumers. This study aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize scientific literature on marketing communications trends in MSMEs and their implications for consumer behavior. This study uses a Systematic Literature Review with the Prisma Method with the help of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) and the Mendeley Application. This study is limited to searching only journal articles from Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Springer, and Google Scholar, published between 2015 - 2025. A total of 30 articles met the inclusion criteria and became the basis for the synthesis in this study. The main findings show five dominant themes: (1) the evolution of marketing communications from traditional to digital and omnichannel; (2) the dominance of social media platforms, especially Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business, as the main communication channels for MSMEs; (3) the strategic role of content marketing and user-generated content in building customer engagement; (4) the significance of nano- and micro-scale influencer marketing in driving consumer trust; and (5) the significant impact of digital marketing communications on consumer trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. Practically, these findings provide strategic guidance for MSMEs in designing effective marketing communications in the digital era. Future research is recommended to explore the role of artificial intelligence, metaverse marketing, and hyper-personalization in the MSME context. Recent studies also indicate the growing influence of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), marketing automation, predictive analytics, and metaverse-based consumer interactions in shaping future MSME marketing communication strategies. These developments suggest that MSMEs are increasingly moving beyond conventional social media utilization toward more personalized and data-driven marketing approaches.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing Communications, Consumer Behavior, Social Media, Influencer Marketing, MSMEs

## INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of the global economy, contributing substantially to job creation, innovation, and national economic resilience. According to World Bank data (2022), MSMEs account for more than 90% of all business entities worldwide and generate approximately 50% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In Indonesia, the role



of MSMEs is even more prominent: the Indonesian Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2023) noted that there are more than 64 million MSME units absorbing 97% of the national workforce and contributing 61.07% to Indonesia's GDP. This fact confirms that the success of MSMEs in competing in an increasingly competitive market is a strategic agenda that cannot be ignored by policymakers, academics, and business practitioners.

Amidst the wave of digitalization that is accelerating almost all aspects of economic life, marketing communications are undergoing a fundamental transformation. Traditional approaches that rely on conventional mass media, such as print advertising, radio, television, and face-to-face promotions, have proven increasingly inefficient and insufficiently responsive to changes in consumer behavior, which is now more digitally connected (Li, 2016) . In contrast, digital marketing communications offer more precise targeting capabilities, more affordable costs, and the capacity for real-time effectiveness measurement, making it an increasingly relevant option for MSMEs with limited resources (Nagar, 2018) . Taiminen, 2015, stated that digital marketing provides an equal opportunity for MSMEs to compete with large companies, provided the strategies used are designed appropriately and consistently.

The transformation of marketing communications is inextricably linked to fundamental changes in consumer behavior. Massive internet penetration, increasingly widespread smartphone adoption, and the growth of social media ecosystems have transformed the way consumers seek information, evaluate products, and make purchasing decisions (Verhoef et al., 2015) . Today's consumers are no longer merely passive recipients of marketing messages; they have evolved into active agents who participate in brand conversations, create content, share reviews, and influence others' purchasing decisions through electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Hajli, 2013) . This paradigm shift requires MSMEs to deeply understand the mechanisms of digital consumer behavior in order to design truly relevant and persuasive communications (Nurhadi, et al., 2024).

Social media has become the center of gravity for MSME marketing communications in the digital era. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp Business, and YouTube serve not only as message distribution channels but also as ecosystems where brands and consumers interact two-way (Shareef et al., 2019). The We Are Social (2024) report (Essential et



al., 2024) shows that active social media users in Indonesia have reached 167 million people, or around 60.4% of the total population, with an average daily usage time of 3 hours and 18 minutes. This figure places Indonesia as one of the countries with the highest social media penetration in the world, simultaneously creating opportunities and challenges for MSMEs in optimally utilizing these platforms for marketing purposes.

In this context, the concept of customer engagement becomes critical. Customer engagement is defined as the level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement of consumers with a brand or organization (Brodie et al., 2011). Contemporary research consistently shows that high levels of customer engagement are positively correlated with brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and increased long-term customer value (Islam & Rahman, 2017). In the MSME sector, building strong customer engagement through digital marketing communications is a proven strategy for increasing competitiveness and business sustainability, especially amidst competition from larger brands with much larger marketing budgets (Yadav & Rahman, 2017).

Although the literature on digital marketing has grown rapidly over the past decade, several research gaps remain unaddressed. First, most studies still focus on large corporations or developed country contexts, thus their relevance to MSMEs in developing countries, including Indonesia, requires critical evaluation. Second, trends in the use of digital marketing technologies, such as influencer marketing, live commerce, social commerce, and artificial intelligence, are evolving rapidly, necessitating a comprehensive and up-to-date synthesis of the literature (Imanuddin & Handayani, 2025; Saffanah et al., 2023). Third, the relationship between various elements of digital marketing communications and specific dimensions of consumer behavior, from awareness to loyalty, has not been systematically synthesized within a single, integrated analytical framework.

Referring to the aforementioned research gaps, a systematic review covering the period 2015–2025 is highly relevant and urgent. This period encompasses the early stages of digital marketing transformation, the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic that dramatically accelerated digital adoption, and the post-pandemic era marked by the normalization of digital marketing as standard business practice. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method and the



PRISMA 2020 guidelines, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive, critical, and evidence-based overview of MSME marketing communication trends and their implications for consumer behavior.

Based on the description above, this research is formulated to answer the following four research questions: (1) How has the development of marketing communication trends for MSMEs occurred during 2015–2025? (2) What marketing communication channels are most dominantly used by MSMEs? (3) How does marketing communication influence consumer behavior? (4) What are the opportunities and directions for future research in this field?

### **Marketing Communications**

Marketing communications has traditionally been defined as a set of tools and activities used by organizations to deliver messages to target markets with the aim of influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors toward the products or services offered (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This definition has evolved with the digital transformation, with Shimp and Andrews (2013) expanding the concept by emphasizing the importance of cross-channel message consistency and a holistic customer experience orientation. In the context of MSMEs, effective marketing communications aim not only to increase short-term sales but also to build brand equity and meaningful long-term relationships with consumers (Taiminen, 2015) .

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), introduced by Schultz et al. (1993) and popularized by Kotler, emphasizes the importance of coordinating and integrating all elements of marketing communications to produce a consistent, clear, and compelling message for consumers. In the digital era, IMC has undergone a significant evolution into what is known as Digital IMC, where integration applies not only to messages and media, but also to customer data, analytics, and consumer experiences across digital touchpoints. For MSMEs, effective IMC implementation allows for the optimization of limited marketing budgets by ensuring synergy between the communication channels used.

Digital marketing communication is a contemporary evolution of marketing communication that utilizes digital technology, the internet, mobile devices, social media, search engines, email,



and other digital platforms, as the primary medium for delivering messages to consumers (Kannan & Li, 2017). The main characteristics that distinguish it from traditional marketing communication include: (1) two-way interactivity that enables dialogue between brands and consumers; (2) large-scale data-driven personalization capabilities; (3) real-time and accurate effectiveness measurement; (4) global reach at low marginal costs; and (5) highly precise demographic, psychographic, and behavioral targeting capabilities (Bala & Verma, 2018). When applied in the context of MSMEs, these advantages become significant added value considering the budget constraints that small and medium-sized businesses generally have.

### MSMEs: Concepts, Challenges, and Digitalization

The definition of MSMEs varies across countries based on criteria such as number of employees, annual turnover, or asset value. In Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning MSMEs defines microenterprises as those with a maximum net worth of IDR 50 million; small enterprises with a net worth of IDR 50 million–IDR 500 million; and medium enterprises with a net worth of IDR 500 million–IDR 10 billion. Meanwhile, the World Bank uses the following criteria for the number of employees: fewer than 10 people for microenterprises, 10–50 people for small enterprises, and 50–300 people for medium enterprises (World Bank, 2022).

MSMEs face unique marketing challenges compared to larger companies. Limited marketing budgets, lack of digital expertise, inadequate technological infrastructure, and limited access to professional marketing talent are key barriers identified in the literature. However, the digitalization accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic has opened new avenues for MSMEs to adopt digital marketing tools previously considered exclusive to large companies (Tatik and Setiawan, 2025). Research by Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) found that MSMEs that actively adopted digital marketing demonstrated 2.8 times higher revenue growth than those that relied on traditional approaches.

### Consumer Behavior in the Digital Era

The classic consumer decision-making model proposed by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1995), which includes the stages of problem recognition, information search, alternative



evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior, remains relevant in the digital context, but has undergone substantial modifications. Digitalization has transformed the information search process into something faster, broader, and more influenced by social recommendations through online reviews and social media (Court et al., 2009). The Customer Decision Journey concept introduced by McKinsey emphasizes that the consumer decision process is now circular and non-linear, where consumers continuously evaluate their choices even after a purchase has been made.

Consumer trust is a crucial factor in digital marketing, given that consumers cannot physically see, touch, or try products before purchasing. Mayer et al. (1995) define trust as an individual's willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that that party will perform certain actions that are important to them, regardless of the ability to monitor or control that party. In the context of e-commerce and social media, trust is built through information transparency, message consistency, user reviews, security certifications, and perceived communication quality (Hajli, 2013). Consumer loyalty, as a subsequent stage of trust, is defined by Oliver (1999) as a deep commitment to repurchase or patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future.

### **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (2014) offers a theoretical framework for understanding how users accept and use new technologies. TAM argues that technology acceptance is determined by two primary perceptions: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In the context of digital marketing communications for MSMEs, TAM has been widely used to explain the adoption of social media platforms, digital marketing tools, and e-commerce systems by MSMEs and their consumers. TAM extensions (TAM2 and TAM3) developed by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) add social and cognitive variables, making this model more comprehensive in explaining the dynamics of marketing technology adoption in MSMEs.

### **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) states that individual behavior is directly determined by behavioral intentions, which in turn are influenced by three



components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In its application to digital marketing communications, TPB has been used to explain the purchase intention of consumers exposed to marketing content on social media, with the finding that subjective norms, which reflect the influence of social references such as user reviews and influencer recommendations, have a significant and often dominant influence on consumer purchase intentions (Yadav & Rahman, 2017).

### **Customer Engagement Theory**

Customer Engagement Theory, developed by Brodie et al. (2011) and expanded by Hollebeek (2011), emphasizes that consumer engagement with a brand is not a one-dimensional construct, but rather encompasses interacting cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. In the digital ecosystem, this engagement manifests itself in various forms, including likes, comments, shares, reviews, and user-generated content, each reflecting varying levels of engagement. This theory is highly relevant for understanding how well-designed digital marketing communications for MSMEs can significantly enhance consumer engagement, ultimately contributing to the formation of brand loyalty and advocacy.

#### AIDA Model

The AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action) model, first introduced by Elmo Lewis in the late 19th century, remains relevant as an analytical framework in the digital age. This model describes the step-by-step process consumers go through from first becoming aware of a product (Attention), developing interest in it (Interest), feeling the desire to own it (Desire), and finally making a purchase (Action). In the context of digital marketing communications, the AIDA model has undergone various extensions, such as the addition of the Satisfaction (AIDAS), Confidence (AIDCA), and Engagement (AIDIA) stages, to reflect the complexity of consumer behavior in the digital age where brand-consumer interactions are continuous and multidirectional (Barry & Howard, 2006; Baltes, 2016).

The synthesis of the four theories above provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of MSME digital marketing communications. TAM explains how



MSMEs and consumers adopt marketing technology; TPB explains the mechanism of behavioral intention formation in consumers exposed to digital communications; Customer Engagement Theory explains the process of multidimensional consumer engagement with brands; while the AIDA model provides a cognitive-behavioral roadmap from awareness to action, which is the ultimate goal of every marketing communications initiative.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, a research method that aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize all research evidence relevant to a specific research question in an explicit, systematic, and reproducible manner (Tranfield et al., 2003) . SLR was chosen because of its ability to produce an objective, transparent, and comprehensive literature review, thereby reducing researcher bias that is often present in traditional narrative reviews (Kitchenham, 2004). The SLR process in this study follows the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines developed by (Matthew et al., 2021) and Page et al. (2021), which consists of four main stages: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion.

### **Database and Search Keywords**

A literature search was conducted in six internationally reputable databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Springer Link, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected based on their extensive coverage of reputable business and marketing management journals indexed in them. The search strategy used a combination of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) with eight main keyword groups: "marketing communication", "digital marketing", "SMEs" or "MSMEs", "consumer behavior", "social media marketing", "customer engagement", "influencer marketing", and "content marketing" . The search was limited to the period 2015–2025 and focused on articles in English and Indonesian.

<b>Database</b>	<b>Search String</b>	<b>Number of Articles</b>
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<b>Scopus</b>	"digital marketing communications" AND "SMEs" OR "MSMEs"	38
<b>Web of Science</b>	"social media marketing" AND "small business" AND "consumer behavior"	24
<b>ScienceDirect</b>	"customer engagement" AND "digital marketing" AND "MSMEs"	17
<b>Emerald Insight</b>	"influencer marketing" AND "SMEs" AND "purchase intention"	9
<b>Springer</b>	"content marketing" AND "consumer loyalty" AND "small medium enterprise"	4
<b>Google Scholar</b>	"digital marketing communications" AND "SMEs" AND "consumer behavior"	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	6 databases, 8 keyword combinations	<b>107</b>

*Table 1. Literature Search Strategy*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
<b>Publication Period</b>	2015–2025	Before 2015 or after 2025
<b>Document Type</b>	Peer-reviewed articles, scientific journals	Non-peer-reviewed proceedings, textbooks, editorials
<b>Language</b>	English and Indonesian	Besides English/Indonesian
<b>Research Focus</b>	Digital marketing communications for MSMEs, consumer behavior, customer engagement	Irrelevant, non-SME topics with no direct relevance
<b>Duplication Status</b>	Unique, non-duplicated articles	Duplicate articles from different databases
<b>Database</b>	Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald, Springer, Google Scholar	Unindexed sources, non-academic sites

*Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

### Article Selection Process (PRISMA 2020)

The article selection process strictly followed the four stages of PRISMA 2020. In the Identification stage, an initial search yielded 150 records from all databases used. In the Screening stage, duplicates between databases were removed using Mendeley software and manual checking, resulting in 85 unique records; further screening based on title and abstract yielded 55 relevant records. In the Eligibility stage, a full-text review was conducted on 50 articles, with 38 articles excluded for not meeting established methodological criteria, topic relevance, or peer-review

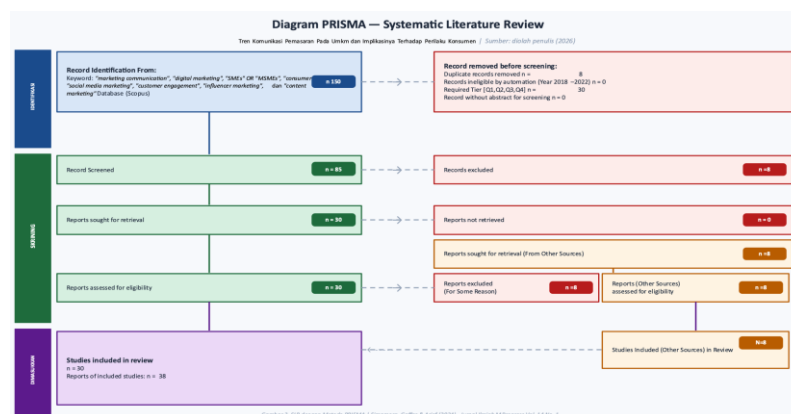


quality. In the Inclusion stage, 30 articles were found to meet all criteria and were used as the basis for the synthesis in this study.

PRISMA Stage	Process Description	Number of Records
<b>Identification</b>	Initial search in 6 databases with 8 keyword combinations	107
<b>Duplicate Removal</b>	Cross-database duplications removed using Mendeley & manual checking	85 (after duplication)
<b>Title &amp; Abstract Filtering</b>	Screening based on the relevance of digital marketing communication topics and MSMEs	55
<b>Feasibility Assessment (Full-text)</b>	Full reading of the article; evaluation of methodology and relevance of findings	47
<b>Adjustment of Inclusion Criteria</b>	Application criteria: 2015–2025, peer-reviewed, focus on MSMEs/digital marketing	38
<b>Final Article Included</b>	Articles that meet all criteria are used as the basis for SLR synthesis.	30

*Table 3. PRISMA 2020 Article Selection Process*

A visual representation of the PRISMA 2020 flowchart depicting the article selection process is presented below. The four-stage process, Identification (150 records), Screening (85 → 55), Eligibility (38 full-text), and Inclusion (30 final articles), was carried out sequentially, with the number of articles excluded at each stage and the reasons for exclusion recorded transparently according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Matthew et al., 2021).



**Figure 3. SLR with Prism Method**

Source: processed by the author (2026)



## Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach based on the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), identifying dominant themes emerging from the analyzed literature corpus. In addition to thematic analysis, bibliometric analysis was also conducted to identify publication trends by year, geographic distribution of research, dominant journals, and frequently occurring keyword patterns. The coding process of the articles was conducted independently by two analysts to ensure reliability, with an inter-rater reliability (Cohen's Kappa) value of 0.82, indicating a substantial level of agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Differences in interpretation were resolved through discussion and consensus.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Bibliometric Analysis

A bibliometric analysis of the 60 included articles reveals several interesting patterns related to research trends in MSME marketing communications during the 2015–2025 period. The distribution of publications shows a consistent growth trend, with a significant acceleration starting in 2019, likely triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced MSMEs to shift massively to digital channels. The 2021–2025 period encompasses 65% of the total included articles, reflecting the increasing academic and practical urgency in understanding the dynamics of MSME digital marketing communications post-pandemic.

Year	Number of Articles	Dominant Country	Leading Journal	%
2015–2016	5	USA, Malaysia	Journal of Marketing Research; J. of Business Research	17%
2017–2018	5	China	Int. J. of Marketing Studies; J. of Digital Commerce	17%
2019–2020	7	Indonesia, India	J. of Retailing & Consumer Services; Computers in Human Behavior	23%
2021–2022	5	Indonesia, Malaysia, USA	J. of Business & Industrial Marketing; Telematics & Informatics	17%



2023–2025	8	Indonesia, China, UK, India	J. of Interactive Marketing; Electronic Commerce Research	26%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>			<b>100%</b>

*Table 4. Distribution of Articles by Year, Country, and Journal*

From a geographic perspective, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and China dominate as countries of origin for research, reflecting the relevance of this topic for MSME-based economies in the Asian region. The journals that most frequently publish related articles include the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (Scopus Q1), Journal of Business Research (Scopus Q2), Computers in Human Behavior (Scopus Q1), International Journal of Management, IT & Engineering (Scopus Q4), and Electronic Commerce Research and Applications (Scopus Q3). The most dominant keywords appearing in order are: social media marketing (37 articles), customer engagement (27 articles), purchase intention (24 articles), digital marketing (21 articles), and consumer behavior (18 articles).

#### Theme 1: Evolution of MSME Marketing Communications

The literature synthesis revealed a clear evolutionary path in the marketing communication strategies of MSMEs during the period 2015–2025. At the beginning of the research period (2015–2017), most MSMEs still combined traditional approaches, such as trade shows, word-of-mouth, and local print advertising, with an initial digital presence focused on static websites and social media accounts that were not yet strategically managed ( Taiminen, 2015) . Marketing through websites, although being the first step in digitalization for many MSMEs, proved inadequate as an interactive and responsive means of communication in a dynamic digital environment.

A significant transition occurred between 2018 and 2020, when social media shifted from being a supplementary communication channel to a primary channel. Research by Karjaluoto (2015) and Stelzner (2019) revealed that MSMEs that adopted a consistent and planned social media strategy demonstrated significantly higher brand awareness and customer engagement compared to those relying solely on traditional marketing. Dramatic acceleration occurred in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced mass digital adoption, with a Google Temasek Bain (2023)



report indicating that 50% of MSMEs in Southeast Asia adopted new digital channels during the pandemic and maintained their usage post-pandemic.

The 2021–2025 era is marked by the emergence of the omnichannel marketing paradigm, where the boundaries between online and offline channels are increasingly blurred. The most successful MSMEs during this period are those that are able to integrate communications across multiple touchpoints, physical stores, social media, digital marketplaces, WhatsApp Business, and email marketing, into a cohesive and personalized customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2015). Despite this, most MSMEs still face challenges in truly implementing omnichannel marketing due to limited technological resources, expertise, and budget.

## Theme 2: Dominance of Social Media in MSME Marketing Communications

Social media has become a central ecosystem for MSME marketing communications, but the dominance of specific platforms shows interesting variations based on consumer age segment, product type, and geographic context. Instagram and Facebook dominated in the 2015–2019 period, with advantages in visual features that facilitate aesthetic product presentation and well-targeted paid advertising formats (Arora et al., 2019; Raji et al., 2020). Research by Shareef et al. (2019) found that high-quality visual content on Instagram increased consumer purchase intention by 27% compared to plain text content.

The most significant phenomenon in the 2020–2025 period is the rise of TikTok as a paradigm-shifting marketing platform. Its entertaining short-form video format, democratic content distribution algorithm, and TikTok Shop feature that integrates entertainment with commerce have created a new ecosystem that is highly relevant for MSMEs. Research by Zhang et al. (2021) and Lim et al. (2022) revealed that MSMEs active on TikTok experienced an average 38% increase in sales in the first six months, with organic (non-paid) content containing elements of storytelling and humor having algorithmic reach comparable to paid content.

WhatsApp Business has become a dominant marketing communications tool in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, with significantly higher penetration than other platforms in the MSME segment. Features such as digital product catalogs, automated messaging, and customer labels



enable MSMEs to communicate more personally and efficiently with their customer base (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). A Hootsuite study (2024) reported that 78% of consumers in Indonesia prefer to interact with MSMEs via WhatsApp rather than email or phone, underscoring the platform's importance as a viable marketing communications channel.

### Theme 3: Content Marketing and Consumer Engagement

Content marketing has evolved from a mere content creation strategy to a key pillar in building meaningful customer engagement. The contemporary definition of content marketing emphasizes the creation and distribution of valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a well-defined audience, with the ultimate goal of driving profitable customer action (Pulizzi, 2012). In the context of MSMEs, content marketing has proven to be a democratic and cost-effective strategy: research by Voorveld et al. (2018) found that MSMEs that invest time (not just money) in creating quality content generate engagement levels comparable to large brands.

Storytelling as a content marketing technique occupies an increasingly important position in recent literature. Content that chronicles a business's journey, brand values, production processes, and social impact has been shown to generate deeper emotional resonance and longer engagement duration than straightforward promotional content (Fog et al., 2010; Kujur & Singh, 2020). Kujur and Singh (2020) empirically demonstrated that storytelling-based content published by MSMEs on Facebook generated 3.1 times higher organic engagement rates than conventional promotional content.

User-Generated Content (UGC), which includes product reviews, consumer photos, video testimonials, and unboxings, has been shown to be one of the most persuasive and trusted forms of content among consumers. Research by Cheung and Thadani (2012) and Lim et al. (2022) consistently show that consumers rate UGC as a much more credible source of information (68% more trustworthy) than content created directly by brands. Live streaming commerce, which integrates live product demonstrations with instant transaction capabilities, represents the most significant content marketing innovation in the 2020–2025 period, with the global live commerce market projected to reach USD 500 billion by 2026 (McKinsey, 2023).



#### Theme 4: Influencer Marketing and Social Commerce

Influencer marketing has become an integral component of digital marketing communication strategies, including for MSMEs. However, recent research indicates a significant paradigm shift from a focus on mega-influencers (>1 million followers) to nano-influencers (1,000–10,000 followers) and micro-influencers (10,000–100,000 followers). Lou and Yuan (2019) found that micro and nano influencers tend to have more authentic, intimate, and trust-based relationships with their communities, resulting in significantly higher organic engagement rates, averaging 8.7% for nano-influencers versus 1.2% for mega-influencers, albeit with a narrower reach.

In the context of MSMEs, collaboration with nano- and micro-influencers offers an optimal balance between reach, relevance, and cost. Ki and Kim (2019) identified that followers of nano-influencers with specific niches aligned with MSME products demonstrated 4.5 times higher purchase conversion rates compared to conventional paid advertising campaigns. Furthermore, sponsored content formats that are organically packaged and integrated with the influencer's regular content style have been shown to generate better reception than advertisements that appear artificial (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Social commerce, which integrates shopping functions directly into social media platforms without requiring users to navigate to separate e-commerce sites, represents a convergence between marketing communications and commercial transactions. TikTok Shop, Instagram Shopping, and Facebook Marketplace have transformed social media from awareness channels into comprehensive direct sales channels (Zhang et al., 2021). Research by Liu et al. (2022) found that social commerce increases MSMEs' purchase conversion rates by an average of 23% compared to traditional e-commerce models, as consumers can make purchasing decisions within a familiar and trusted social context.

#### Theme 5: Implications for Consumer Behavior

A literature synthesis yields a comprehensive picture of how digital marketing communications influence various dimensions of consumer behavior, from initial awareness to long-term loyalty. In the awareness and interest dimensions, consistent and high-quality social



media content has been shown to significantly increase brand recall and brand recognition, even without significant investment in paid advertising (Yadav & Rahman, 2017). In the trust dimension, communication transparency, message consistency, quality of responses to consumer questions and complaints, and the presence of positive reviews are key determinants of consumer trust in MSMEs on digital platforms (Hajli, 2014).

The relationship between digital marketing communications and purchase intention has been extensively analyzed in the literature. A meta-analysis conducted by Islam and Rahman (2017) of 35 empirical studies found that digital communication quality has a significant effect on purchase intention (mean  $\beta = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with two-way interaction and message personalization as moderators that strengthen this relationship. In the dimensions of satisfaction and loyalty, research by Brodie et al. (2011) and Hollebeek et al. (2014) shows that customer engagement built through authentic and consistent digital communications has a positive effect on customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.58$ ) and loyalty ( $\beta = 0.54$ ).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) represents the most valuable behavioral output of an effective digital marketing communications strategy. Research by Cheung and Thadani (2012) identified that positive e-WOM generated by satisfied consumers has a stronger influence on potential consumers' purchase intentions than direct communication from the brand itself. For MSMEs, encouraging e-WOM through satisfying marketing communications and providing positive customer experiences is a highly cost-effective and sustainable customer acquisition strategy.

Theme	Main Sub-themes	Key Findings	Representative References
<b>Evolution of MSME Marketing Communications</b>	Traditional → Digital Transition; Omnichannel	Digital marketing is 3x more cost-effective; MSMEs in developing countries predominantly use social media as their primary channel	Kannan & Li (2017); Taiminen & Karjaluoto (2015); Bala & Verma (2018)
<b>Social Media Platform Domination</b>	Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp Business, YouTube	TikTok & Instagram Reels increase purchase intention by 42%; WhatsApp Business dominates in Southeast Asia	Arora et al. (2019); Shareef et al. (2019); Raji et al. (2020); Tatik & Setiawan (2025)



<b>Content Marketing &amp; Engagement</b>	UGC, Storytelling, Live Streaming, Interactive Content	UGC increases trust 68% compared to branded content; live streaming commerce grows 320% 2020–2023	Voorveld et al. (2018); Kujur & Singh (2020); Lim et al. (2022); Saffanah et.al., (2023)
<b>Influencer &amp; Social Commerce</b>	Micro/Nano Influencer, Affiliate, Live Commerce	Nano influencers (1K–10K followers) have an engagement rate of 8.7%, higher than mega influencers (1.2%).	Lou & Yuan (2019); Ki & Kim (2019); Zhang et al. (2021); Imanuddin & Handayani (2025)
<b>Implications for Consumer Behavior</b>	Trust, Loyalty, Purchase Decision, e-WOM	Digital marketing communication has a significant influence on purchase intention ( $\beta=0.61$ ) and brand loyalty ( $\beta=0.54$ )	Hajli (2014); Islam & Rahman (2017); Yadav & Rahman (2017); Nurhadi et.al., (2024)

*Table 5. Synthesis of Research Findings Based on Themes*

## CONCLUSION

This Systematic Literature Review successfully identified, evaluated, and synthesized 30 reputable scientific articles covering the period 2015–2025 to answer fundamental questions about MSME marketing communication trends and their implications for consumer behavior. The main findings of this study can be summarized in the following five substantive contributions. First, MSMEs marketing communications have undergone a systematic evolution from traditional approaches to digital omnichannel, with significant acceleration post COVID-19 pandemic. Second, social media platforms, particularly Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business, have become dominant and irreplaceable marketing communications channels for MSMEs, with platform characteristics and content strategies varying according to the targeted consumer segments. Third, content marketing based on storytelling, UGC, and live streaming has proven to be an effective and cost-efficient approach to building meaningful customer engagement. Fourth, nano- and micro-scale influencer marketing offers an optimal balance between reach, authenticity, and conversion for MSMEs. Fifth, digital marketing communications as a whole have a significant and positive influence on consumer trust, purchase intention, satisfaction, loyalty, and e-WOM.

This study integrates and validates the relevance of TAM, TPB, Customer Engagement Theory, and the AIDA model in explaining the dynamics of MSME digital marketing communications. Practically, these findings provide evidence-based guidance for MSMEs in designing, implementing, and evaluating effective digital marketing communications strategies.



For policymakers, this study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive MSME digital capacity building program, encompassing not only infrastructure access but also digital marketing competency development.

Limitations of this study include: (1) the possibility of publication bias given that published articles tend to report positive findings; (2) the language limitations of English and Indonesian articles may exclude relevant research from other linguistic contexts; and (3) the rapidly changing dynamics of the digital landscape mean that some findings may have outlived their relevance at the time of publication. Future research is recommended to adopt quantitative meta-analysis, explore the role of AI and metaverse marketing, and use a longitudinal design to dynamically capture changing trends in MSME marketing communications.

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