
Strategies For Digital Acceleration And Revitalization Of Msmes To Achieve Business Sustainability, Resilience, And Competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the urgency of digital transformation for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Bekasi City as a strategy to achieve sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness. Although digitalization has been widely addressed in existing literature, limited attention has been given to localized strategies for digital acceleration and revitalization. To address this gap, a qualitative approach was applied using in-depth interviews with leaders of MSME associations, who simultaneously act as practitioners and stakeholders with comprehensive insights into the digitalization landscape. The data, collected from interview transcripts, were analyzed through keyword mapping and cluster analysis using Visualization of Similarity (VoS) software, allowing for a systematic exploration of recurring themes and interconnections. The findings indicate that, prior to the establishment of MSME associations, business activities were predominantly individual, limited, and traditional, with unstructured training opportunities, constrained market access, and insufficient digital literacy and equipment. The study further highlights that digital technologies serve as enablers for expanding market reach, while MSMEs require continuous support in the form of funding, technological equipment, and capacity-building programs. Digitalization emerges as an inevitable necessity for MSMEs to thrive in a rapidly evolving economic and technological environment. This research provides practical recommendations to guide stakeholders in formulating policies and strategies tailored to local needs, ultimately supporting digital acceleration and revitalization to foster sustainable MSME development.

Keywords: competitiveness; digital acceleration; MSMEs; revitalization; sustainability

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in Indonesia's economy (Khasanah, 2023; Munthe et al., 2023; Rahim, 2019), including in Bekasi (Siswanti, 2020; Sulistiyo & Putra, 2020). MSMEs contribute to job creation (Azhari et al., 2024; Novie & Mahmudah, 2022) and the improvement of social welfare (Aliyah, 2022; Srijani, 2020). However, in the era of digital transformation, MSMEs face increasingly complex challenges, particularly in adopting digital technologies (Octiva et al., 2024) to ensure business sustainability. Digitalization enhances the competitiveness of MSMEs (Budiarti, 2024), expands market access (Uly Mabruroh Halida, 2023), and improves operational efficiency (Heryana et al., 2023). While the importance of MSME digitalization has been widely discussed at a general level, there is a need for a more specific study addressing the urgency of digitalization and strategies for accelerating digital transformation in Bekasi City. Along with technological advancements, MSMEs encounter significant challenges in adopting digitalization (Nayak et al., 2025; Zaini, 2024), particularly due to limitations in resources (Indah et al., 2025; Sinha et al., 2024), infrastructure (Mustafa et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2025), and digital literacy (Amelia Dwi, 2023; Edeh et al., 2025). In response to these challenges, there is a pressing need for a digital acceleration and revitalization strategy for MSMEs in achieving sustainable, resilient, and highly competitive enterprises. This study focuses on addressing these issues by exploring strategies that can help MSMEs overcome barriers in the digitalization process and strengthen their capacity for sustainable and competitive growth. This study seeks to address three main research questions. First, it examines the extent to which digitalization is urgent in enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs in Bekasi City. Second, it explores the challenges faced by MSMEs in adopting digital technologies. Finally, it investigates the strategies that can be implemented to accelerate digital adoption and the revitalization of MSMEs in order to strengthen business sustainability.

This study carries significant urgency, as digital transformation has become a decisive factor for the survival of MSMEs in the modern era. Without effective digitalization, MSMEs risk stagnation and losing competitiveness amid rapid technological change. The findings of this research are expected to provide practical recommendations for MSME stakeholders in Bekasi City to develop systematic and sustainable strategies for accelerating digital adoption.

The study employed a qualitative method through in-depth interviews with the MSME Association in Bekasi City. This approach was chosen to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the conditions, challenges, and digitalization needs faced by MSMEs in enhancing business sustainability and competitiveness.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Several areas have been examined, yet certain aspects require further exploration in this study. While prior research has highlighted the role of digital literacy in enhancing the capacity of MSMEs to navigate the digital era (Amelia Dwi, 2023; Mustafa et al., 2024) and has discussed MSME digitalization within the national context (Heryana et al., 2023), there remains a lack of specific investigation into the urgency of digitalization and the challenges faced by MSMEs in adopting digital technologies. Branding design has been shown to enhance the competitiveness of MSMEs (Budiarti, 2024), and digitalization likewise contributes to strengthening competitiveness (Zaini, 2024). However, the integration of digital acceleration strategies with MSME revitalization for sustainability has not yet been adequately addressed.

MSMEs contribute significantly to improving community welfare at the national level (Aliyah, 2022; Khasanah, 2023; Munthe et al., 2023). This study complements that perspective by emphasizing digitalization as a strategic approach to strengthening competitiveness and ensuring sustainability. There are recognized challenges in the implementation of MSME digitalization (Octiva et al., 2024), and the MSME sector in Indonesia is urged to prioritize digital transformation (Azhari et al., 2024). This study complements existing studies by proposing applicable strategies for digital acceleration tailored to MSMEs.

The development of human resources (HR) has been shown to broadly enhance the MSME economy (Indah et al., 2025). This study specifically links digital acceleration with HR capacity as a critical factor for business sustainability. This study is closely related to several previous works, which highlight that work–life balance in MSMEs is shaped by work pressures and limited resources (Sulistyanto, Mistina, Utami, et al., 2024). Building on this, the present study extends the exploration of the urgency of digital acceleration to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs. Other research has revealed that the sustainability of MSME enterprises largely depends on their ability to adapt to technological and market changes, while challenges persist in terms of limited access to digital resources and low levels of digital literacy (Sulistyanto, Mistina, Amruloh, et al., 2024).

Previous studies have shown that digital marketing strategies significantly enhance MSME income (Puspasari et al., 2024). Building on this foundation, the present proposal emphasizes the integration of technology into both operations and business strategies to foster comprehensive transformation. Prior research has also confirmed that MSME sustainability is shaped by a combination of conventional approaches and digital integration (Sulistyanto, Puspasari, Amruloh, et al., 2024). This study extends the discussion by examining the factors that accelerate digitalization, drawing on the lived experiences of informants to formulate practical solutions for business revitalization and improved competitiveness.

Previous studies have primarily focused on exploring digital transformation and MSME sustainability by examining how digitalization and sustainability can be integrated

into MSME management (Sulistyanto, Puspasari, Amrulloh, et al., 2024) and by identifying the barriers and opportunities faced by MSMEs in adopting sustainability principles (Sulistyanto, Mistina, Amrulloh, et al., 2024). Previous studies also explore the balance in MSME management across digitalization, sustainability, and operational efficiency (Sulistyanto, Mistina, Utami, et al., 2024), and analyze the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in increasing revenue for culinary sector MSMEs (Puspasari et al., 2024).

This research fills a gap in the existing literature by highlighting the urgency of digitalization in the context of MSMEs in Bekasi City, which has received limited attention in prior studies. It further develops a Digital Acceleration and Revitalization Strategy to foster resilient and highly competitive business sustainability, while also integrating digitalization, sustainability, and business resilience into a unified strategy—an approach rarely addressed in previous research.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach (Bougie & Sekaran, 2021; Cooper & Schindler, 2022) focusing on digital acceleration and MSME revitalization strategies in Bekasi City. The qualitative method was chosen as it is well-suited to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies for digital acceleration and MSME revitalization in this local context. The qualitative method allows for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of phenomena within the real-world context of the MSME business environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with MSME associations, participatory observations, and document analysis. Participatory observation was employed to understand the practices adopted by MSMEs in implementing digital technologies. Interview transcripts were analyzed using Visualization of Similarity software (Bukar et al., 2023) to map the key terms emerging from the interviews.

The first stage consist of review of the literature on MSME digitalization and revitalization strategies, the identification of research gaps, and the development of research instruments, including interview guides, observation checklists, and criteria for selecting informants. Stage 2: Data Collection involved conducting in-depth interviews with seven key stakeholders who possess extensive knowledge of MSMEs, including the Chairperson and Secretary of the MSME Association, the Head of the Education & Training Division, the Chairperson of Koperasi Merah Putih, and two MSME practitioners. In addition, relevant documents related to MSME digitalization policies in Bekasi City were collected to complement and triangulate the interview data. In Stage 3, the collected dataset was used as input for the Visualization of Similarity software. The software generated results including similarities between words across several clusters, the strength of connections (link strength), the frequency of word or phrase occurrences in the analyzed text, and a visual map of these relationships. This was followed by an in-depth analysis of strategies for digital acceleration and MSME revitalization based on the mapped data. In Stage 4, a progress report was prepared based on the data analysis,

role of digitalization in strengthening UMKM, supported by government initiatives and oriented toward food-related products as well as broader business transformation. Within this context, the government is perceived as a key actor driving and facilitating these developments.

The yellow cluster, representing digitalization and the local economy, is centered on the keywords UMKM, digitalization, government, food and transformation. This cluster illustrates that the discussion primarily emphasized the significance of UMKM digitalization as a key driver of local economic development. The discussions highlight how government support is considered vital in facilitating this process, particularly in directing digital initiatives toward food-related products and fostering broader business transformation. In this regard, the government emerges as a pivotal actor shaping both the trajectory and sustainability of UMKM digitalization.

The red cluster, centered on technology, strategy, problems, limitations, system, and region, reflects the structural barriers to digitalization at the village level. Respondents emphasized that while technology is essential, its potential is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, limited digital literacy, and systemic inefficiencies. The recurrent association with “problems” and “limitations” highlights how digital transformation is often framed in terms of constraints rather than opportunities. This cluster therefore underscores the need for strategic interventions to address structural weaknesses before digitalization can fully support UMKM development.

The blue cluster, consisting of marketing, products, sales, and community, highlights the role of market orientation in sustaining UMKM competitiveness. The analysis shows that product innovation and effective marketing strategies are viewed as essential for expanding sales and strengthening community-based enterprises. This cluster reflects how digital tools are increasingly recognized as enablers of market access and customer engagement for local products

The green cluster, comprising collaboration, training, skills, and empowerment, underscores the importance of human capital development in the digitalization of UMKM. The findings suggest that capacity building through training and collaborative initiatives enhances entrepreneurial skills and fosters community empowerment. This cluster indicates that sustainable digital transformation depends not only on technological adoption but also on strengthening human resources and social capital.

Based on interviews with key informants, it was revealed that before the establishment of formal MSME associations (“*Paguyuban UMKM*”) in Bekasi City, MSMEs operated individually. Many businesses were run from home or roadside stalls, with limited and traditional activities. Training, mentorship, licensing, and digital marketing access were largely unavailable, and each business functioned independently, leading to constrained growth and limited achievements. These findings align with previous studies showing that fragmented MSME operations hinder competitiveness (Octaviani & Putri, 2025) and resilience (Sindhvani et al., 2023). Key challenges included insufficient guidance and training (Azevedo & Almeida, 2021; Pedone et al., 2023), access

to a government official (Abu et al., 2025; Achmad et al., 2023) and financial support (Ullah et al., 2021), restricted market access (Megersa, 2020). This underscores the importance of collective organization and institutional support mechanisms in strengthening MSMEs' role in local economic development

Subsequently, the interviews also revealed that the adoption of digital technologies faced several obstacles. Digital literacy varied widely among MSME practitioners, from complete beginners to those already proficient in social media and e-commerce. Many still relied on traditional marketing methods, and there were limitations in digital infrastructure, including devices, applications, and online facilities. The lack of structured mentorship meant that learning was often self-directed, time-consuming, and error-prone. Furthermore, knowledge gaps in packaging, product standards, and licensing (e.g., Household Food Industry License "*PIRT*", Halal Certification, and Business Identification Number "*NIB*") hindered effective digital marketing. Key barriers identified included limited digital literacy, insufficient funding, restricted internet access, lack of mentors, low confidence, and difficulty adapting to online markets. These findings align with recent studies in Indonesia; for example, research on Indonesian MSMEs has documented that digital literacy (Ollerenshaw et al., 2021; Zahoor et al., 2023) and limited technological skills (Changalima et al., 2025; Indrawati et al., 2020; Prasanna et al., 2019) are among the most digital transformation barriers.

In addition, the interviews revealed that the Paguyuban has played a critical role in facilitating digital adoption by uniting experienced and novice MSME practitioners to share knowledge and experiences. Initiatives included forming WhatsApp groups and online marketplaces, providing mentorship in digital marketing, live streaming, and social media, and conducting both online and offline training sessions. Paguyuban also organized members into clusters based on digital proficiency and product type, enabling targeted mentoring. Additionally, it supported market integration between offline events (bazaars, car free days) and online platforms, serving as a bridge between MSMEs and local government for access to information, funding, and official permits. Such collective action and peer-to-peer learning mechanisms are consistent with prior studies emphasizing the importance of community-based organizations (Anggara & Djamaluddin, 2024) in accelerating MSME digitalization and capacity-building (Alamanda et al., 2021).

Moreover, the interviews highlighted that MSMEs in Bekasi increasingly adopt digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Shopee to expand markets, streamline operations, and improve customer service. Effective strategies include combining offline and online sales, sustained mentorship, clustering by skills and products, and producing authentic digital content. Training, conducted in both online and offline formats, emphasized experiential learning—"dare to make mistakes but learn from them"—covering social media use, live streaming, packaging, licensing, and online marketing. These practices align with recent studies showing that blended training (Distanont & Diteeyont, 2024), community-based learning (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022), and digital storytelling (Maharani & Setiawati, 2023) strengthen MSME digital readiness

(Hoa & Tuyen, 2021) and competitiveness (Fang et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023). Building on these strategies, several persistent challenges were also identified in advancing MSME digitalization. To address these gaps, recommended strategies involve clustering MSMEs by skills and product type, providing continuous mentorship, strengthening practical training, enhancing infrastructure, and maximizing social media and marketplace use. Effective collaboration among SME (Audretsch et al., 2023), role of cooperatives for trade (Dahliah, 2021), government (Achmad et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023), and universities (Brien & Hamburg, 2014) is also essential for knowledge transfer (Anand et al., 2020), and funding access (Esho & Verhoef, 2022), consistent with findings from prior studies.

At the end of the interviews, the informants agreed that digitalization strategies contribute directly to MSME sustainability by expanding market reach, improving efficiency, strengthening branding, and enabling continuous product evaluation through customer feedback. Adaptation is fostered through ongoing training, mentorship, and collaboration with universities, while community-based initiatives enhance resilience and competitiveness. Such approaches promote innovation, creative marketing, and the effective integration of offline and online channels, reinforcing MSMEs' long-term viability in dynamic markets.

CONCLUSION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATION

This study concludes that digital transformation is an urgent and unavoidable necessity for MSMEs in Bekasi City to achieve resilience, sustainability, and competitiveness. Prior to the establishment of associations, MSME activities were fragmented, traditional, and unstructured, with limited digital literacy, inadequate equipment, and restricted market access that further constrained growth. The findings demonstrate that digitalization is not only inevitable but also pivotal in expanding market reach, strengthening business continuity, and enhancing long-term viability. To accelerate this transformation, MSMEs require sustained support through financial assistance, provision of technological tools, and continuous training programs. Ultimately, community-based strategies for digital acceleration and revitalization are essential to fostering adaptive, resilient, and highly competitive MSMEs in an increasingly dynamic economic and technological landscape.

Over the past 3–5 years, the establishment of Paguyuban at the RW and village levels has marked the beginning of digitalization for MSMEs. Integration of offline and online markets, including live streaming during offline events, and increased adoption of social media and e-commerce have enhanced market reach. MSMEs aim to advance from basic digital users to professional levels, leveraging new technologies such as AI and creative digital tools. Future development emphasizes intensive mentorship, stakeholder collaboration, sustainable digital practices, and scaling MSME innovations from local to provincial levels

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made. First, local government and policymakers should provide greater financial support and accessible

funding schemes tailored to the needs of MSMEs. Second, investment in digital infrastructure and the provision of adequate technological equipment are necessary to overcome resource limitations. Third, continuous capacity-building programs, particularly in digital literacy and skills training, should be implemented to ensure long-term adoption. Finally, MSME associations and cooperatives should be further empowered as collaborative platforms that facilitate knowledge sharing, market access, and collective innovation.

This study has several limitations. The research was conducted only in Bekasi City, which may not fully represent the diverse conditions of MSMEs in other regions. The qualitative approach, based on in-depth interviews with a limited number of participants, restricts the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the analysis relied on qualitative keyword mapping and clustering without incorporating quantitative data, which could have provided broader validation. Future research may address these limitations by adopting mixed-method approaches, expanding the sample across different regions, and integrating quantitative performance indicators to enrich the understanding of MSME digital transformation

Future studies should extend beyond Bekasi City to capture diverse MSME contexts and adopt mixed methods that combine qualitative insights with quantitative data. Comparative and longitudinal research could reveal how different settings and timeframes shape digital adoption and its long-term impacts. Further exploration of emerging technologies such as AI, fintech, and e-commerce is also recommended to deepen understanding of their role in strengthening MSME resilience and competitiveness.

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