

Integration of Discount Strategies, Digital Promotion, and Customer Engagement in Enhancing MSME Competitiveness in the E-Commerce Ecosystem During Ramadan

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ABSTRACT

Competition in the e-commerce ecosystem intensifies during Ramadan, particularly for MSMEs that must compete with large corporations. This study aims to analyze how the integration of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement can enhance the competitiveness of MSMEs in the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan. Using a literature review approach with a descriptive qualitative method, this research examines various studies from Google Scholar and credible websites from the 2021–2025 period. From an initial selection of 30 articles, a rigorous screening process was conducted, resulting in 22 relevant articles. The findings indicate that discounts can attract customer attention, but their effectiveness heavily depends on the right digital promotion strategy and active customer engagement. MSMEs that successfully leverage social media, live shopping, and data-driven marketing strategies have proven to be more competitive in attracting and retaining customers. Case studies such as Rendang Minang Rajo, Buttonsscarves, and Somethinc demonstrate that the combination of discounts, digital marketing strategies, and strong customer interaction can significantly boost sales during Ramadan. The implications of this study highlight the importance of utilizing digital technology and data-driven marketing strategies for MSMEs to remain competitive in an increasingly saturated market.

ABSTRAK

Persaingan dalam ekosistem e-commerce semakin meningkat selama bulan Ramadhan, terutama bagi UMKM yang harus bersaing dengan perusahaan besar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana integrasi strategi diskon, promosi digital, dan customer engagement dapat meningkatkan daya saing UMKM dalam ekosistem e-commerce selama bulan Ramadhan. Menggunakan pendekatan tinjauan pustaka dengan metode kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini mengkaji berbagai studi dari Google Scholar dan website kredibel periode 2021–2025. Dari 30 artikel awal, dilakukan seleksi ketat hingga diperoleh 22 artikel yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa diskon mampu menarik perhatian pelanggan, tetapi efektivitasnya sangat bergantung pada strategi promosi digital yang tepat dan keterlibatan pelanggan yang aktif. UMKM yang sukses memanfaatkan media sosial, live shopping, serta pemasaran berbasis data terbukti lebih kompetitif dalam menarik dan mempertahankan pelanggan. Studi kasus seperti Rendang Minang Rajo, Buttonsscarves, dan Somethinc menunjukkan bahwa kombinasi diskon, strategi pemasaran digital, dan interaksi pelanggan yang kuat dapat meningkatkan penjualan secara signifikan selama bulan Ramadhan. Implikasi penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pemanfaatan teknologi digital dan strategi pemasaran berbasis data bagi UMKM agar dapat bersaing di pasar yang semakin kompetitif.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly competitive e-commerce ecosystem, especially during the Ramadan period, marketing strategies become a crucial factor in enhancing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

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(MSMEs). Ramadan is a time when consumer spending patterns experience a significant surge, marked by increased demand for various products, including food and beverages, clothing, and household necessities. MSMEs that capitalize on this momentum with effective marketing strategies can reap substantial benefits, but intense competition on e-commerce platforms demands more innovative and integrated approaches. One increasingly relevant approach is the integration of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement to enhance MSME competitiveness during Ramadan.

Discount strategies have long been used by businesses as a tool to attract consumer interest and boost sales volume. In the context of e-commerce, implementing discounts becomes more complex as it must consider various factors such as profit margins, consumer behavior, and e-commerce platform algorithms, which often prioritize products with strong sales performance (Cano et al., 2023). During Ramadan, MSME discount offerings may vary, ranging from direct price cuts and product bundling to free shipping promotions. However, without an effective promotional strategy, offered discounts may fail to reach the right audience or have an optimal impact on MSME competitiveness.

Digital promotion plays a vital role in ensuring that the discount strategies implemented by MSMEs reach consumers widely and effectively. In the e-commerce ecosystem, digital promotion encompasses various channels, including social media, paid advertising, influencer marketing, as well as search engine optimization (SEO) and data-driven marketing strategies. During Ramadan, increased online consumer activity creates a significant opportunity for MSMEs to optimize their digital promotion strategies to enhance visibility and competitiveness in the increasingly fierce market. The proper use of digital technology can help MSMEs attract more customers and maintain their loyalty over the long term (Asikin et al., 2024).

However, simply offering discounts and conducting digital promotions is insufficient without strong customer engagement. Customer engagement reflects the level of consumer interaction with a brand or product, which contributes to loyalty and repeat purchasing decisions. In the context of e-commerce during Ramadan, engagement can be built through active social media interactions, customer loyalty programs, and personalized shopping experiences based on consumer preferences. MSMEs that can foster high customer engagement tend to have better competitiveness because they not only rely on pricing strategies but also build long-term relationships with their customers (Akin, 2024).

The integration of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement is a key factor in enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan. MSMEs that combine these three elements can create more effective marketing strategies, where offered discounts are supported by well-targeted digital promotions and reinforced by high levels of customer engagement (Sharabati et al., 2024). Through this approach, MSMEs can increase brand awareness, attract more customers, and drive higher conversion rates, ultimately strengthening their market competitiveness.

Furthermore, this strategic integration can help address several challenges often faced by MSMEs in the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan, such as unhealthy price wars, overreliance on marketplace platforms, and dynamic shifts in consumer behavior. MSMEs can avoid detrimental price wars and create a unique value proposition for their consumers by optimizing discount strategies through data-driven approaches, leveraging digital promotions effectively, and fostering better customer engagement.

In Indonesia, various MSMEs have successfully implemented this strategy during Ramadan to enhance their competitiveness. For example, local culinary brands such as Rendang Minang Rajo and Kopi Kenangan have utilized a combination of discounts, aggressive digital promotions through social media, and interactive campaigns to boost customer engagement. Meanwhile, fashion MSMEs like Buttons scarves and Vanilla Hijab have optimized this strategy by implementing loyalty programs and interactive content to enhance the shopping experience during Ramadan.

Based on these phenomena, this study aims to analyze how the integration of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement can improve MSME competitiveness in the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan. This study will provide valuable insights for MSME players in designing more effective marketing strategies and assist stakeholders in understanding the key factors contributing to MSME success in navigating competition during this peak consumption period.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Discount Strategy

A discount strategy is a marketing method used by businesses to attract customers by offering price reductions or special incentives for a specific period (R. Harahap & Situmorang, 2023). Discounts can take various

forms, including direct price cuts, cashback, product bundling, or tiered discounts that increase as the purchase quantity grows. In the context of MSMEs within the e-commerce ecosystem, discount strategies aim to boost sales volume, attract new customers, and enhance the loyalty of existing ones. However, unplanned discounting can lead to shrinking profit margins or customers purchasing only during promotions, making it essential to combine discount strategies with other marketing approaches for sustainability.

Digital Promotion

Digital promotion refers to various marketing techniques that utilize digital platforms such as social media, marketplaces, websites, email marketing, and paid advertisements to reach customers (Khanom, 2023). In the e-commerce ecosystem, digital promotion is crucial as it enables MSMEs to target a broader market more cost-effectively than conventional marketing methods. Techniques such as search engine optimization (SEO), data-driven marketing, live shopping, and influencer collaborations are effective strategies for increasing product visibility and appeal. Additionally, the use of digital analytics helps businesses understand consumer behavior, allowing for more targeted promotional campaigns that yield higher conversion rates.

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is the level of involvement and interaction between customers and a brand or business, reflecting how connected customers feel toward the products and services offered (Ng et al., 2020). In the e-commerce ecosystem, customer engagement can be achieved through active interactions on social media, responsive customer service, loyalty programs, and interactive campaigns such as giveaways or live-streaming sessions. Strong engagement increases the likelihood of repeat purchases and customer loyalty, as customers feel more valued and develop an emotional connection with the brand. MSMEs that successfully build strong customer engagement tend to have greater long-term stability despite intense competition in the digital market.

MSMEs

MSMEs are business entities ranging from small to medium-scale enterprises that play a crucial role in the economy, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia (M. A. K. Harahap, Ausat, et al., 2023; Sutrisno et al., 2023). MSMEs are highly flexible in adapting to market changes but often face challenges related to capital access, marketing, and technology adoption. In the e-commerce ecosystem, MSMEs have significant opportunities to grow by leveraging digital platforms; however, competition with larger companies requires them to implement effective marketing strategies. The combination of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement is a key factor in enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs, enabling them to survive and expand in a dynamic business environment.

E-Commerce

E-commerce (electronic commerce) is a business model that facilitates the buying and selling of goods and services digitally over the internet. E-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, Lazada, and Bukalapak have become primary channels for MSMEs to reach a broader market without the need for physical stores (Ausat et al., 2022). Technological advancements and the increasing number of internet users have made e-commerce more competitive, where digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in attracting consumers. Additionally, features such as digital payment methods, fast delivery systems, and social media integration further enhance the online shopping experience.

Ramadan

Ramadan is a special period for Muslims and also marks a peak consumption season, particularly in the food, fashion, and daily necessities sectors (M. A. K. Harahap, Sutrisno, et al., 2023; Rijal et al., 2023; Yogatama, 2024). During Ramadan, there is a significant increase in shopping activities, both offline and online, with e-commerce experiencing a surge in transactions higher than any other month. Consumers tend to seek special Ramadan promotions, bundled product packages, and items that support religious activities and Eid preparations, prompting many brands and MSMEs to capitalize on this momentum to boost sales. Effective marketing strategies during Ramadan should incorporate attractive discounts, extensive digital promotions, and more intensive customer engagement to succeed in an increasingly competitive market.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a literature review with a qualitative approach aimed at analyzing the integration of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement in enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs within the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan. A descriptive analysis method is employed to explore various findings from previous research, providing a deeper understanding of the role and effectiveness of marketing strategies implemented by MSMEs in the context of e-commerce. The data for this study is obtained from various credible sources, including Google Scholar and official websites of academic institutions, business organizations, and relevant research institutions. The data collection period spans from 2021 to 2025, ensuring that the study remains relevant to the latest developments in digital marketing strategies and e-commerce trends, particularly during Ramadan. In the data collection process, an initial search yielded 30 articles relevant to the research topic. However, to ensure data quality and alignment with the research focus, a selection process was conducted based on specific criteria, such as relevance to the topic, the methodology used in previous studies, and the credibility of the sources. After a rigorous selection process, 22 articles meeting the criteria were chosen as the basis for analysis in this study. Data analysis is conducted descriptively by reviewing findings from previous research and identifying patterns, research gaps, and key factors influencing the effectiveness of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement in enhancing MSME competitiveness during Ramadan. Through this approach, the study aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions that can serve as a reference for MSME practitioners in designing more optimal marketing strategies within the e-commerce ecosystem.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan, competition among MSMEs becomes increasingly intense due to a surge in demand accompanied by aggressive marketing strategies from large corporations, forcing small businesses to optimize their approach in attracting customers. Consumers, who are becoming more selective in comparing prices and promotional benefits, tend to take advantage of large discounts, cashback offers, and product bundling, requiring MSMEs to carefully design their strategies to remain competitive without sacrificing profitability. The integration of discount strategies, digital promotions, and customer engagement becomes the key to success, where discounts serve as a direct incentive to increase conversions, digital promotions through social media and marketplaces expand reach and enhance brand awareness, while customer engagement through personalized services, loyalty programs, and responsive interactions plays a crucial role in building long-term relationships. Research shows that the effectiveness of these strategies depends on the level of discount offered and how MSMEs build compelling promotional narratives, create memorable shopping experiences, and leverage customer data to provide more relevant and targeted offers, enabling them to compete more effectively amidst the dominance of major brands (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2024).

One example of an MSME that has successfully implemented this strategy is Rendang Minang Rajo, a Padang-based culinary business that significantly increased its sales during Ramadan through a combination of tiered discount strategies, effective digital promotions, and strong customer engagement (Minang, 2024). Their tiered discount approach encouraged bulk purchases, boosting transaction volumes without drastically sacrificing profit margins. However, this strategy did not stand alone; it was reinforced by an aggressive digital campaign on Instagram and TikTok, where they consistently uploaded content promoting their products and crafting compelling narratives about Minang cuisine. Recipe videos showcasing various ways to serve rendang, customer testimonials that strengthened product credibility, and live-streaming sessions displaying the authentic rendang-making process all contributed to increasing customer engagement and fostering brand attachment. Additionally, by utilizing paid advertising features on e-commerce platforms and social media, they ensured their promotional campaigns reached a wider and more relevant audience, creating a sustainable effect that boosted sales during Ramadan and enhanced long-term customer loyalty (Tiara, 2025).

Beyond the culinary industry, MSMEs in the fashion sector have also demonstrated how integrating smart marketing strategies can enhance competitiveness, as seen in the success of Buttonsarves, a premium hijab brand from Indonesia that leveraged the Ramadan momentum to drive sales growth and strengthen customer loyalty (Hotria & Aditya, 2024). Buttonsarves created a more engaging shopping experience and encouraged customer retention by combining exclusive discounts available only during specific periods, con-

tent-driven digital promotion strategies, and customer engagement across various platforms. Their gamification techniques, such as mix-and-match hijab challenges, themed giveaways, and collaborations with renowned influencers, successfully boosted social media engagement, expanded audience reach, and reinforced brand identity. Furthermore, they effectively utilized live shopping features on Instagram and Shopee to create a sense of urgency through exclusive flash sales available only during live sessions, attracting thousands of customers in a short time. The success of this strategy was reflected in the surge in sales during Ramadan and the increasing interaction within their loyal customer community, demonstrating that digital marketing effectiveness depends not only on discounts but also on the ability to create immersive and emotional experiences for consumers.

The success of Ramadan marketing strategies is also evident in the beauty industry, as seen in the approach taken by Somethinc, a local skincare brand that strengthened its competitiveness through data-driven strategies and intensive customer interactions (Rissanty, 2021). Rather than merely offering conventional discounts, they strategically designed special Ramadan bundling packages tailored to consumer needs, such as skincare sets to maintain skin hydration during fasting. They could identify purchasing patterns, product preferences, and optimal timing for executing more personalized and relevant advertising campaigns by leveraging analytics from e-commerce platforms and social media. This strategy was further reinforced with content-driven digital promotions on Instagram and TikTok, where they actively engaged with audiences through Q&A sessions, live streaming, and skincare tips specifically related to Ramadan conditions such as dehydration and dry skin. This approach enhanced customer engagement, built emotional connections, strengthened brand trust, and boosted customer retention. As a result, their strategy led to increased sales during Ramadan and created a more loyal customer base, positioning Somethinc as one of the leading local skincare brands capable of competing with global players through targeted marketing innovations.

The success of integrating marketing strategies during Ramadan is closely tied to the increasing use of social media and digital platforms, which continue to drive consumer shopping behavior toward online channels. According to a report by Google and Temasek (2023), searches for fashion, food, and beauty products surged by over 40% compared to other months (Wicaksono, 2023). This trend reflects the high consumer interest in finding the best deals, making it crucial for SMEs to design data-driven marketing strategies that maximize visibility and conversion rates. However, the main challenge for SMEs is not only attracting customers but also maintaining competitiveness without falling into price wars that erode profit margins. Therefore, a more strategic approach – such as product differentiation, strong storytelling in digital marketing, and the use of data analytics to target audiences with greater precision – becomes a key success factor. Additionally, the integration of an omnichannel experience, where promotions are carried out across e-commerce platforms and social media through live shopping, influencer collaborations, and interactive campaigns, can enhance customer engagement and strengthen loyalty without relying solely on large discounts. SMEs can leverage the Ramadan momentum to boost short-term sales while building a more sustainable and competitive business ecosystem in the long run by focusing on value creation and delivering a more personalized customer experience.

In some cases, SMEs that rely solely on discounts without a strong digital promotion strategy and customer engagement often experience temporary sales spikes during Ramadan but fail to retain customers afterward. This highlights that dependence on price wars without fostering loyalty can backfire on businesses in the long term. For instance, many food SMEs offer deep discounts to attract new customers, but without retention strategies such as loyalty programs, personalized post-Ramadan offers, or continuous communication through social media and email marketing, customers are unlikely to return as their purchasing decisions were driven purely by price rather than the brand's value or experience. On the other hand, SMEs that successfully retain customers after Ramadan combine discounts with storytelling-driven marketing strategies, creating emotional connections with customers and building communities through interactive content such as live streaming, Q&A sessions, or informative product education. This approach ensures that customers are not only drawn by discounts but also feel a stronger attachment to the brand, increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases even without large promotional offers. The long-term sustainability of SMEs depends on their ability to attract new customers through promotional discounts while also creating shopping experiences that keep customers engaged and loyal beyond the Ramadan period (Damayanti et al., 2024).

Moreover, studies indicate that SMEs implementing personalization techniques in their marketing strategies have a competitive edge as they provide more relevant and engaging shopping experiences for customers. A prime example is Vanilla Hijab, a local Muslim fashion brand that optimizes customer purchase

data to offer more targeted and exclusive promotions (Teaam, 2023). Vanilla Hijab provides special discounts for repeat buyers of similar products by analyzing transaction histories and customer preferences, creating a sense of exclusivity and increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases. This approach makes promotional campaigns more effective while strengthening customer loyalty, as buyers feel valued and appreciated by the brand. Furthermore, this personalization strategy is reinforced by digital marketing tactics such as social media retargeting ads and email marketing tailored to individual customer preferences, ensuring they receive offers that align with their interests and needs. Through this data-driven marketing integration, SMEs can optimize promotional budgets, avoid unnecessary spending on less relevant audiences, and significantly improve conversion rates during Ramadan while fostering long-term customer relationships and brand loyalty.

Based on various case studies and analyses, it can be concluded that the integration of discount strategies, digital promotions, and customer engagement plays a significant role in enhancing SME competitiveness in the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan. However, its success heavily depends on how these three elements are synergistically and data-drivenly implemented to create a long-term impact. Discounts are indeed effective in capturing customer attention, but without a strong digital marketing strategy and efforts to build customer engagement, their effects tend to be short-lived and do not guarantee customer retention beyond Ramadan. Therefore, SMEs aiming for success must combine these three elements while adopting a data-driven approach, such as analyzing customer preferences for personalized offers, optimizing ad retargeting for greater relevance, and leveraging social media interactions and e-commerce features like live shopping to create more immersive shopping experiences. With a more structured strategy, SMEs can avoid reliance on price wars that reduce profit margins and instead focus on building long-term relationships with more loyal customers, ensuring sustainable business growth even beyond the Ramadan period.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

This study highlights the importance of integrating discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement in enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs within the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan. Based on the analyzed findings, it can be concluded that discounts serve as a primary attraction to capture customer attention, but their effectiveness depends on how strategically MSMEs utilize them. Digital promotion plays a crucial role in ensuring that discounts reach the right consumers through various platforms such as social media, marketplaces, and digital advertising. Meanwhile, customer engagement is a key factor in building customer loyalty, ensuring that they are not only interested in short-term promotions but also maintain long-term interactions with the brand. The success of these strategies relies on a data-driven approach, the utilization of digital technology, and innovation in creating more engaging and interactive shopping experiences for customers.

Practically, this study provides insights for MSME players in designing more effective marketing strategies during Ramadan. The integration of discount strategies, digital promotion, and customer engagement can serve as a solution for MSMEs to navigate the increasingly competitive e-commerce landscape. The implications for the industry suggest that MSMEs need to optimize digital technology, such as customer analytics, data-driven marketing strategies, and more intensive interactions with customers through social media and marketplaces. Additionally, for stakeholders such as the government and e-commerce platforms, these findings can serve as a basis for designing policies or programs that support MSME digitalization, including digital marketing training and access to more effective promotional features on e-commerce platforms.

To enhance MSME competitiveness within the e-commerce ecosystem during Ramadan, several recommendations can be made. First, MSMEs need to develop a more structured discount strategy, such as using product bundling techniques, tiered discounts, or cashback programs that encourage repeat purchases. Second, digital promotions should be maximized by optimizing the use of social media, collaborating with influencers, and executing data-driven campaigns that accurately target potential customers. Third, customer engagement should be strengthened through more active interactions with customers, such as live shopping sessions, loyalty programs, and responsive customer service. Fourth, MSMEs should avoid relying solely on discounts as their primary marketing strategy and instead focus on value creation and enhancing customer experience to maintain long-term competitiveness.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, it employs a literature review approach, meaning it does not include primary data that could provide a deeper perspective on the real-

world implementation of these strategies. Second, the study is limited to the period of 2021–2025, which may not fully capture the latest trends that could emerge in the coming years. Third, while the study highlights various marketing strategies used by MSMEs, the specific impact of each strategy on business performance has not been quantitatively analyzed. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies using surveys or interviews with MSME practitioners to comprehensively measure the effectiveness of these strategies.

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