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Determinants of MSE Performance in the Creative Economy: The Roles of Market Orientation, Social Media, Empowerment, and Innovation in Padang, Indonesia

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Abstract:
This study investigates the influence of market orientation, social media adoption, and employee empowerment on innovation capability and business performance among Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the creative economy sector of Padang, Indonesia. A total of 87 respondents were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The findings reveal that market orientation and employee empowerment significantly enhance innovation capability, while social media adoption shows no effect on either innovation capability or business performance. Additionally, none of the three independent variables directly improves business performance. Instead, innovation capability emerges as the only significant predictor of business performance, indicating its mediating role in translating organizational capabilities into competitive outcomes. These results underscore the gap between awareness of strategic business practices and their effective implementation among creative MSEs. The study provides theoretical contributions by challenging the assumption that digital adoption and market awareness automatically lead to performance improvement and confirms the central role of innovation capability in developing competitive advantage. Practical implications highlight the need for structured innovation programs, digital strategy training, and managerial capacity-building to support sustainable growth in the creative economy sector.

Keywords: Market Orientation, Social Media Adoption, Employee Empowerment, Innovation Capability, Business Performance

Introduction

In this era of globalization, the business competition environment is increasingly dynamic and complex, and many businesses are transforming their operational models. In the ever-changing world order, the understanding of competition has grown rapidly in recent years (1). Developing countries have recognized that Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) contribute significantly to economic growth in employment and GDP (2). Quoted from the databox, a WEF (World Economic Forum) survey found that the majority of MSEs worldwide identified maintaining and expanding their businesses as their biggest challenge, with 67% reporting this. The second challenge is to improve the quality of human resources, which is 48%, followed by strengthening business culture at 34% and the use of technology and innovation at 25%. Meanwhile, funding challenges rank fourth at 24%, and government policies, such as tax rates, interest rates, and others, rank last at 22% (3). From this data, it can be concluded that the sequence of challenges faced by MSEs shows the dominant priorities that must be considered, so in this study, the researcher focuses on the four main challenges of MSEs by examining factors that represent these challenges, such as market orientation, social media use, employee empowerment, innovation capabilities, and MSEs performance.

MSEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) are the foundation of a strong national economy. Quoted from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, MSEs are part of the Indonesian economy that is independent and has great potential to improve people's welfare seen from the three roles of MSEs, including: a means of equitable distribution of the economic level of small people, a means of

alleviating poverty, and a means of foreign exchange income for the state. MSEs are a means of equitably distributing economic opportunities for small people because they are found across various regions. MSEs are a means of alleviating poverty because they absorb a large workforce. MSEs are a source of foreign-exchange income for the state because they reach not only the domestic market but also the international market (4). The MSE sector plays a strategic role in Indonesia's economic growth (5). MSEs in Indonesia span various sectors that contribute significantly to GDP. Quoted from the databox, 99% of businesses in Indonesia are at the MSEs level, totaling 66 million, which contribute 61.9% to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), equivalent to Rp 9,580 trillion, and absorb 117 million workers, or 97% of the local workforce. In terms of their contribution to GDP, micro businesses accounted for 37.4% in 2019. This value almost rivals the contribution of large-scale businesses, which reached 39.5%, and small businesses, which accounted for 9.5% (Santika, 2023).

The creative economy is the development of new economic concepts based on information and creativity derived from ideas and knowledge from human resources as a factor of production, such as every product that is developed, both in terms of form, packaging, distribution, or promotion (6). The creative economy is a value added consisting of creativity, innovation, and discovery of a product or service (6). Increasing the role of creative economy MSEs encourages speed in the development of a country (6).

Boys in Minangkabau were told to migrate to find work or sell so that many Minangkabau men became entrepreneurs in various products and services. From the perspective of the creative economy, the Minangkabau community's matrilineal structure is highly supportive of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's program to develop local community economies based on local wisdom.

"The composition of micro and small businesses is indeed the largest when compared to medium enterprises in Padang City, but in fact it does not contribute too much to the GDP of Padang City because the focus of micro business actors is still just running a business to meet daily needs. However, it is undeniable that its existence became more important during COVID because many people turned to micro business actors because they lost their jobs," said Ade, Head of MSEs Empowerment, Padang City Cooperatives, and MSEs Office, when interviewed by researchers on October 21, 2024. From the interview, the following information was also obtained: 1) The biggest problem of micro businesses in Padang City is marketing. Therefore, the training offered by the Cooperatives and MSEs Office focuses on digital marketing. 2) Of the number in Padang City, only 15% to 25% of micro businesses can be facilitated by the Padang City Cooperatives and MSEs Office. In addition, the services offered by the Padang City Cooperatives and MSEs Office include brand registration, issuance of NIB (Business Identification Number) and PIRT (Household Industrial Food) permits, halal certification, and special places for product advertising. Each village also has one facilitator who is on standby if anyone wants to consult, 3) of the number in Padang City, only 100 micro businesses actively and independently use social media.

The performance of MSEs is currently attracting significant attention because it can help remove barriers and open new opportunities for them to grow and compete successfully in regional and global markets (7). The performance of MSEs is essential for developing countries (8). In order to achieve good performance in the current competitive environment, departing from the concept of production, product, and sales to the concept of marketing and social marketing, one form of relevant adaptation that needs to be done by creative economy MSEs is to identify consumer needs or changes in market trends and then provide suitable products for them (pull strategy). With the growing emphasis on human capital, organizations have reoriented their structures toward a people-centered model and explored various strategies to enhance workforce effectiveness. This evolution has driven the adoption of contemporary management concepts, including empowerment (9). Social applications initially focused on the challenges of advertising and marketing, but over time, social media evolved into a platform that complemented all marketing activities (7). Technological advancements are evolving rapidly across sectors, while products and services are becoming obsolete more quickly and competitive pressures continue to intensify. These conditions have strengthened the strategic importance of innovation as a key driver for maintaining relevance and achieving competitive advantage in business (10). Marketing and innovation are necessary for businesses to gain a competitive advantage. MSEs can survive and grow by developing their competitive advantage through innovation capabilities (2).

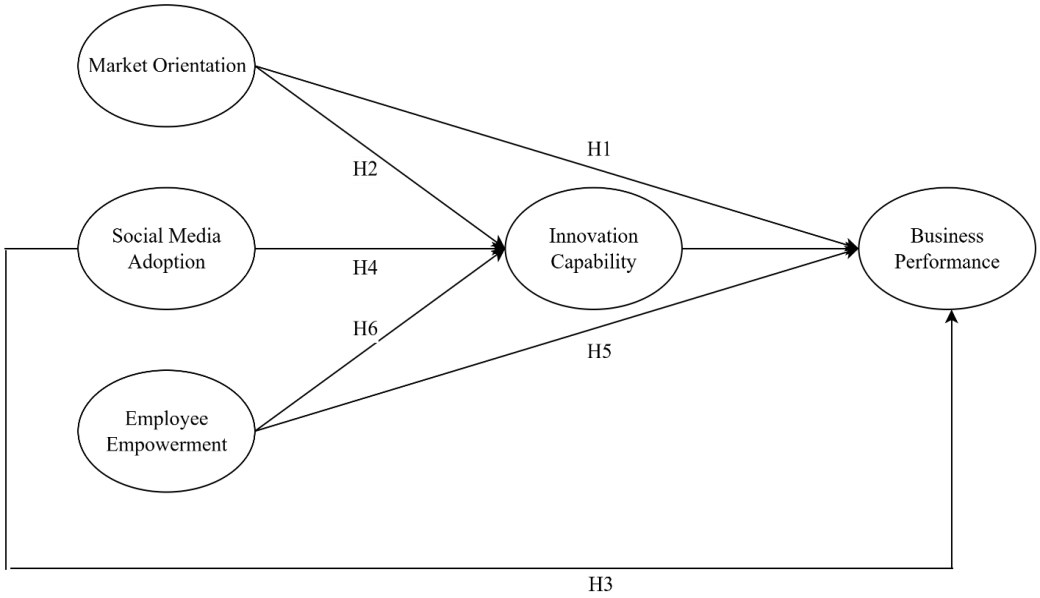

Figure 1: Research Model

This study employed primary data obtained directly from relevant respondents representing Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the creative economy sector of Padang City, Indonesia. Data were collected through a survey method using a structured questionnaire as the primary research instrument from 135 respondents. All questions were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The target respondents met the following criteria: 1) operating in one of the creative economy subsectors as defined by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia (including game development, crafts, interior design, music, fine arts, product design, fashion, culinary, film and video animation, photography, visual communication design, television and radio, architecture, advertising, performing arts, publishing, and application development); 2) operating for at least three years; 3) employing a minimum of three non-family members actively involved in daily operations; and 4) utilizing social media for business activities.

The collected data were analyzed using Smart PLS version 3.0 with the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. This method was applied to assess both the measurement and structural models simultaneously, enabling the examination of relationships among latent variables. The use of SEM-PLS was justified by its suitability for complex models, predictive accuracy, and robustness in handling data from relatively small to medium-sized samples typical of MSME research contexts.

RESULTS

Of the 135 questionnaires distributed, 87 were confirmed valid after screening and subsequently used for data analysis. The following section outlines the demographic profile of the respondents along with key characteristics of their businesses.

Table 1: Demographic profiles of the respondents (N= 87)

Characteristics	N	(%)
Gender		
Male	51	59
Female	36	41
Age		
18-27 years old	19	22
28-43 years old	43	49
44-59 years old	21	24
>60 years old	4	5

Characteristics	N	(%)
Level of education		
Did Not Finish Elementary School	0	0
Completed Elementary/Junior High/Senior High School	27	31
Completed Diploma I/II/III	7	8
Completed Bachelor's Degree (S1)/Diploma IV	46	53
Completed Postgraduate Master's Program (S2)	7	8
Completed Postgraduate Doctoral Program (S3)	0	0
Creative Economy Business Sector		
Game Development	0	0
Crafts	12	14
Interior Design	5	6
Music	0	0
Fine Arts	0	0
Product Design	2	2
Fashion	7	8
Culinary	39	45
Film and Video Animation	0	0
Photography	4	5
Visual Communication Design	4	5
Television and Radio	0	0
Architecture	0	0
Advertising	9	10
Performing Arts	2	2
Publishing	3	3
Applications	0	0

The demographic and business profiles of respondents indicate that creative economy MSEs in Padang are predominantly managed by individuals aged 28–43 years and hold bachelor's degrees, suggesting a relatively educated entrepreneurial base. The distribution of business sectors shows an intense concentration in the culinary industry, followed by crafts, advertising, and fashion, indicating sectoral dominance rather than equal representation across subsectors. These characteristics provide relevant contextual grounding for interpreting the later statistical findings, particularly regarding how market orientation, social media usage, employee empowerment, and innovation capability operate within the specific structure of the creative economy MSME ecosystem in Padang. Overall, the respondent profile supports the analytical framework and helps position the empirical results within a clear socio-economic landscape.

Table 2: AVE (Average Variance Extracted)

Variables	AVE
Market Orientation	0,571
Social Media Adoption	0,620
Employee Empowerment	0,653
Innovation Capability	0,666
Business Performance	0,510

As presented in Table 2, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for the variables, market orientation, social media adoption, employee empowerment, innovation capability, and business performance, all exceed the threshold value of 0.50. This indicates that each construct meets the criterion for

convergent validity, confirming that all measurement indicators in this study are valid and adequately represent their respective latent variables.

Table 3: Square Root of AVE

	IC	BP	MO	EE	SMA
Innovation Capability (IC)	**0.756**				
Business Performance (BP)	0.609	**0.787**			
Market Orientation (MO)	0.498	0.427	**0.808**		
Employee Empowerment (EE)	0.627	0.487	0.406	**0.816**	
Social Media Adoption (SMA)	0.438	0.265	0.331	0.416	**0.714**

Based on Table 3, it can be observed that the square root values of AVE for all constructs are higher than the correlations between each construct and other latent variables. This indicates that each latent construct better explains the variance in its own indicators than in those of other constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables in this study exhibit good discriminant validity, confirming the measurement model's validity.

Table 4: Composite Reliability

Variables	Composite Reliability
Market Orientation	0,918
Social Media Adoption	0,755
Employee Empowerment	0,857
Innovation Capability	0,842
Business Performance	0,830

Based on Table 4, the composite reliability values for all variables exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the measurement items for each construct are consistent and reliable. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables in this study demonstrate good reliability.

Table 5: R-Square Value

	R Square	Adjusted R-Square
Business Performance	0.407	0.378
Innovation capability	0.485	0.467

Based on Table 5, the adjusted R-square value for the innovation capability variable is 0.467, indicating that the independent variables, market orientation, social media adoption, and employee empowerment explain 46.7% of the variance in innovation capability. The remaining 53.3% is influenced by other factors not included in this study. Meanwhile, the adjusted R-square for business performance is 0.378, suggesting that market orientation, social media adoption, employee empowerment, and innovation capability collectively explain 37.8% of the variance in business performance, with the remaining 62.2% attributable to external factors beyond the model.

Table 6: Path Coefficient Values

Hypothesis	t Statistics	p Values	
Market Orientation -> Business Performance	1.540	0.062	rejected
Market Orientation -> Innovation Capability	3.133	0.001	accepted
Social Media Adoption-> Business Performance	0.455	0.325	rejected
Social Media Adoption -> Innovation Capability	1.591	0.056	rejected
Employee Empowerment -> Kinerja Bisnis	1.204	0.115	rejected
Employee Empowerment -> Innovation Capability	4.940	0.000	accepted
Innovation Capability -> Business Performance	3.576	0.000	accepted

Table 6 presents the results of the path coefficient analysis, which examines the direct effects among the variables in this study. The findings indicate that market orientation has a significant and positive effect on innovation capability (t = 3.133; p = 0.001), supporting the hypothesis that firms with stronger market orientation tend to enhance their innovation capability. However, market orientation does not significantly influence business performance (t = 1.540; p = 0.062), suggesting that its impact on performance may operate indirectly through other factors, such as innovation.

Furthermore, employee empowerment shows a significant positive relationship with innovation capability (t = 4.940; p = 0.000), suggesting that empowering employees enhances their creativity and contributions to innovation development. In contrast, employee empowerment does not directly affect business performance (t = 1.204; p = 0.115), indicating that innovation-related processes may mediate its influence.

Meanwhile, social media adoption does not significantly affect either business performance (t = 0.455; p = 0.325) or innovation capability (t = 1.591; p = 0.056). This finding suggests that using social media alone may not guarantee improved innovation or business outcomes without strategic integration into broader marketing and innovation systems. Lastly, innovation capability demonstrates a significant positive effect on business performance (t = 3.576; p = 0.000), confirming its crucial role as a key driver of SME success in the creative economy sector of Padang.

Overall, these results emphasize that innovation capability serves as a mediating mechanism linking market orientation and employee empowerment to business performance, reinforcing the notion that developing innovation-oriented strategies is essential to improving SME competitiveness.

Discussions

Hypothesis 1 is not supported, indicating that market orientation does not have a significant direct effect on business performance among creative MSEs in Padang. Although market orientation is theoretically expected to improve business outcomes by aligning products and strategies with customer needs (11), (12). The insignificant result suggests that having market insight alone is insufficient to drive performance without adequate operational capacity, resources, and strategic execution. This finding aligns with perspectives stating that the benefits of market orientation often depend on mediating or moderating factors such as organizational readiness, innovation capability, or resource availability (13), (11). Empirical evidence from developing markets also shows mixed results, where market orientation may fail to translate into performance gains when firms lack managerial skills, technology, or scalability (14), (15). In the context of creative MSEs, many of which operate at a microscale, face high competition, have limited capital, and offer easily replicable products, market knowledge may not directly boost revenue or profitability. Therefore, the rejected H1 suggests that market orientation may operate more as an indirect enabler than an immediate performance driver, requiring complementary capabilities such as innovation, digital readiness, and strategic resource utilization to deliver measurable business outcomes.

Hypothesis 2 is supported, indicating that market orientation has a significant positive effect on innovation capability among creative MSEs in Padang. This outcome aligns with theoretical perspectives by (12) and (11), who emphasize that firms guided by customer needs, competitor analysis, and market responsiveness are more likely to generate new ideas and convert market insights into innovative solutions. Empirical evidence from prior studies also reinforces this relationship, where market orientation has been shown to drive innovation across various sectors, including MSEs in Indonesia (16), (15) and international contexts such as Iran, India, and Mexico (17), (18), and (19). In the creative economy landscape, characterized by rapid trend shifts, competitive pressure, and demand for uniqueness, market insights function as strategic resources that fuel experimentation and value creation. Therefore, the confirmation of H2 suggests that strengthening market orientation can serve as a critical foundation for developing sustained innovation capability and enhancing competitive advantage among creative MSEs in Padang.

Hypothesis 3 is not supported, indicating that social media adoption does not significantly influence business performance among creative MSEs in Padang. Although social media is theoretically positioned as a tool that enhances market reach, customer interaction, and promotional effectiveness (20), (21) its actual impact depends largely on strategic execution rather than mere usage. This result suggests that while many MSEs actively maintain online presence, social media activities may remain transactional, inconsistent, or limited to basic content posting, rather than being integrated into structured digital marketing strategies that drive measurable performance outcomes. Similar findings from (22) and other studies in developing markets indicate that a lack of digital skills, analytics capabilities, and targeted advertising investment may weaken

the potential business impact of social media, particularly for micro-sized firms with limited resources and high competition. Therefore, the rejection of H3 implies that social media adoption alone is insufficient to improve business performance without complementary elements such as content strategy, digital literacy, customer engagement management, and proper utilization of platform features.

Hypothesis 4 is not supported, indicating that social media usage does not significantly influence innovation capability among creative MSEs in Padang. Although social media theoretically provides access to market trends, customer feedback, and competitor insights that could stimulate innovation (20) the findings suggest that its use remains primarily operational rather than strategic. This aligns with the absorptive capacity perspective (23) which asserts that the availability of information alone does not lead to innovation unless firms possess the skills and systems to interpret and apply it. Empirical studies have shown contrasting outcomes, while research by (8) and (7) indicates that social media can support innovation when integrated with structured digital strategies. Similar studies in developing MSME contexts reveal that limited digital literacy, resource constraints, and transactional content practices reduce their innovative potential. Therefore, the rejection of H4 suggests that MSEs in Padang may require stronger digital capabilities and strategic training before social media can function as an effective driver of innovation rather than merely a communication tool.

Based on the results, Hypothesis 5 is rejected, indicating that employee empowerment does not significantly affect the business performance of creative MSEs in Padang. Although empowerment theoretically contributes to performance by encouraging autonomy, responsibility, and decision-making (24). The findings suggest that empowerment within MSEs remains limited to operational rather than strategic involvement. The small scale of businesses that most operate with one to two employees, combined with owner-centric decision-making and limited managerial capacity, likely reduces the relevance of empowerment practices. This condition is consistent with studies showing that empowerment only drives performance when accompanied by structured systems, competence development, and shared authority (25), (26). Therefore, the insignificant result suggests that MSEs in Padang may need stronger managerial practices, clearer job structures, and skill development initiatives before empowerment translates into measurable improvements in business outcomes.

The findings confirm Hypothesis 6, demonstrating that employee empowerment significantly enhances innovation capability among creative MSEs in Padang. This suggests that when employees are given autonomy, encouraged to contribute ideas, and supported in skill development, they become active agents in innovation rather than passive executors of routine tasks. The result aligns with theoretical perspectives such as psychological empowerment (24). Furthermore, absorptive capacity is the ability of empowered individuals to recognize, process, and apply new knowledge to generate creative solutions. The strong significance of H6 also reflects contextual conditions of MSEs, where flexible structures and direct owner–employee interaction make empowerment highly influential in accelerating experimentation and product refinement. This finding is consistent with previous research (9), (26), which emphasizes empowerment as a key driver of innovation in small business settings. Therefore, this result implies that strengthening empowerment practices through trust, involvement in decision-making, and continuous competency development can serve as a strategic mechanism to enhance organizational creativity and reinforce innovation capacity within MSEs.

The results confirm that Hypothesis 7 is accepted, indicating that innovation capability has a significant and positive influence on the business performance of creative MSEs in Padang. The evidence suggests that micro and small enterprises that prioritize innovation activities, such as developing new products, improving internal processes, or implementing inventive promotional strategies, tend to perform better in terms of efficiency, customer experience, and revenue growth. This aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which conceptualizes innovation as a strategic resource valuable, uncommon, and difficult to duplicate that enables firms to establish and maintain a lasting competitive position in the market. The significance of this relationship also reflects the dynamic characteristics of the creative industry, where responsiveness to trends, flexibility in decision-making, and the ability to customize offerings are essential for maintaining relevance and market competitiveness. Supporting past research, such as (26), (27), and (28) this finding reinforces the idea that innovation is not merely an optional activity but a key driver of long-term business performance. Overall, the acceptance of H7 highlights the importance of MSEs continuously building and strengthening their innovation capability through learning, experimentation, and digital integration to sustain their growth in an increasingly competitive market landscape.

Conclusion

This study critically assessed how market orientation, social media use, and employee empowerment shape innovation capability and business performance among creative-economy MSEs in Padang. The results reveal a structural disconnect between strategic awareness and operational execution. Although market orientation exists, it does not translate into measurable business outcomes, suggesting that MSEs lack the mechanisms, resources, and managerial discipline required to operationalize market insight. Similarly, despite widespread social media use, it fails to generate innovation or performance value, indicating that technology adoption remains superficial and largely tactical rather than strategic. Employee empowerment exhibits a dual pattern: it does not directly enhance performance. However, it significantly contributes to innovation capability, reinforcing the idea that empowerment must be coupled with systemized decision-making and performance alignment to be effective. Ultimately, innovation capability emerges as the only variable with a direct, significant impact on business performance, confirming that innovation, not mere awareness, tools, or autonomy, is the decisive pathway linking internal capabilities to competitive outcomes. These findings suggest that MSEs in the creative sector operate in a transition phase: aware of modern business practices but unable to institutionalize them into performance-driven routines fully.

The findings contribute to the ongoing debate on capability-building in small enterprises by demonstrating that the presence of strategic constructs such as market orientation, social media adoption, and empowerment does not guarantee performance improvement unless accompanied by absorptive capacity and implementation mechanisms. The nonsignificant effects observed for market orientation and social media use challenge mainstream assumptions in SME literature that access to information and digital tools automatically translates into competitive gains. Instead, results highlight innovation capability as the central mediating construct, reinforcing the perspective of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Knowledge-Based Theory (KBT) that sustainable performance arises from internal capability transformation rather than mere adoption of external frameworks or technologies. This study, therefore, positions innovation capability as a critical missing link for emerging-market MSEs, especially in creative sectors where performance depends on differentiation rather than operational scale.

From a managerial and policy standpoint, the findings reveal a structural capability gap among MSEs. The lack of a significant impact from market orientation and social media usage indicates that many MSEs use these tools only at a surface level, without integrating them into market analysis, decision-making, or marketing analytics. Similarly, employee empowerment appears symbolic rather than systemic, lacking mechanisms such as role autonomy, structured feedback cycles, or performance-linked innovation incentives. To address this, capacity-building programs must shift from generic entrepreneurship training toward structured innovation development, digital strategy implementation, and organizational learning practices. Government, incubators, and support institutions should introduce targeted interventions such as innovation labs, digital mentoring, and competency-based HR support systems. Strengthening innovation capability must also be institutional rather than individual, ensuring that creative MSEs can convert knowledge, technology, and workforce potential into measurable economic value.

Although the study provides meaningful insights into the innovation and performance dynamics of creative MSEs in Padang, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 87 respondents limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the studied population and may not fully represent other creative sectors or regions in Indonesia. Second, the study treats creative subsectors and business scale uniformly, even though different industries (such as culinary, fashion, and craft) and micro vs. small enterprises may exhibit distinct managerial, technological, and market characteristics that influence the model differently. Third, measurements of social media usage relied solely on perceptual responses, rather than objective behavioral digital metrics such as follower growth, engagement rate, content type, or advertising activity. This conceptual gap suggests that the current measurement may capture social media presence rather than strategic utilization. Fourth, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to capture long-term causality or performance shifts over time, particularly for constructs such as innovation, which often require extended implementation cycles.

Based on these limitations, several directions are proposed for future studies. First, expanding the sample size and including multiple regions, or conducting comparative analyses across subsectors and business scales, will provide more robust generalizations. Second, future research may incorporate mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to capture better dynamic behavioral and causal relationships, especially in

innovation development and performance outcomes. Third, digital behavioral indicators, such as social media analytics, digital engagement, advertising spend, and platform conversion rates, should be integrated to produce a more accurate assessment of digital marketing effectiveness. Fourth, external contextual variables such as market structure, competitive intensity, policy support, and technological readiness could be included to develop a more comprehensive understanding of performance drivers. Additionally, refinement of questionnaire indicators, particularly for social media usage duration and functionality, would improve measurement precision and interpretation.

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