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STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES OF CLOTHING SALES BUSINESS IN THE MODERN DIGITAL ERA

Ismatul Khawa¹, Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha²

¹Faculty of Bussiness Economics and Islam, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan,, Indonesia, ORCID ID: [0009-0006-2601-4090](#)

²Faculty of Bussiness Economics and Islam, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan,, Indonesia, ORCID ID: [0000-0002-8394-5776](#)

Abstract

This research discusses strategies and challenges in developing a clothing selling business in the digital era, which is increasingly in demand by teenagers and small businesses. Technological advances enable wider market access through social media and e-commerce platforms. This research aims to identify effective marketing strategies and challenges faced in maintaining and developing a clothing business in the digital era. The method used is qualitative research with a case study approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation analysis. The results showed that the use of social media, paid advertising, and collaboration with influencers are the main strategies in increasing the competitiveness of the clothing business. Product innovation and customer service also play an important role in attracting consumers. However, the business faces various challenges, such as limited capital, intense competition, changing market trends, and lack of understanding of digital marketing. Therefore, adaptive strategies, improved digital skills, and good stock and capital management are required to maintain business sustainability. In conclusion, the clothing business has great potential if supported by the right digital marketing strategy. This research is expected to provide insights for businesses in facing business challenges in the digital era.

Keywords: Clothing business digital marketing strategy, business challenges, social media, e-commerce

1. INTRODUCTION

Doing a selling business is one of the most chosen ways to earn income, both as a main and side job. This is due to the flexibility offered in running a selling business, where one can determine their own time, strategy, and the type of product or service they want to sell, for example selling clothes. Many people have chosen to do a clothing selling business because the potential profits that can be obtained are quite large if managed properly. In addition, the selling business also initially does not always require large capital at the beginning, especially with the existence of business models such as dropshipping or resellers that allow a person to sell without having to stock goods in advance, first. With the right marketing strategy, a clear target market, and good financial management, a selling business can grow and provide benefits in the long run, a selling business also provides an opportunity for someone to be more independent in managing a business, determining product innovation, and building

networks with customers and business partners, which of course to start it all does not escape the challenges and problems faced.

When starting a selling business, it will certainly experience difficulties and have its own challenges. Here are some challenges that must be faced, such as finding new customers, selling suddenly quiet, limited capital, and stock of goods that suddenly run out. In addition, in the midst of increasingly fierce business competition today, attracting customers by promoting in great demand today and also making attractive the products being sold is one of the right ways for now. For example, making new products that are clothing designs, besides that, producers

Although there have been many studies that discuss the benefits and marketing strategies in the selling business. However, there are several aspects that have received less attention in the literature, especially regarding the specific challenges faced by small business owners in the clothing selling business. While most researchers highlight the importance of product innovation and promotional strategies, there is limited discussion on how entrepreneurs can effectively overcome capital and stock limitations in the long term. In addition, although business models such as dropshipping and reseller are increasingly popular, there are still minimal studies that discuss their impact on business sustainability, especially in dealing with the risks of demand fluctuations and market competition. Especially for novice businessmen to overcome the challenges of starting a business, including how to build customer loyalty in the midst of intense competition.

To overcome the challenges of doing apparel business, entrepreneurs need to use the right strategies. In order to attract new customers, the use of digital marketing such as social media, paid advertising, and collaboration with influencers can increase product visibility. In case of a decline in sales, measures such as providing discounts, updating product designs in line with trends, and maintaining relationships with customers through loyalty programs can help draw attention to the business. To overcome limited capital, entrepreneurs can use dropshipping business models, preorder systems, or seek funding through small business loans and partnerships. In addition, efficient stock management with digital records and cooperation with trusted suppliers can prevent shortages. In the face of increasing competition, creating a strong brand, improving product quality, and providing responsive and friendly customer service can be important factors to keep customers and increase business competitiveness for a long time.

My motivation for conducting this research is to understand more about the challenges faced by small business owners in the clothing selling business and find effective strategies to overcome these obstacles. Although many studies have discussed profitability and marketing strategies, there is still a gap in literature regarding concrete solutions to capital limitations, stock management, and how to build customer loyalty in the midst of increasingly fierce competition. With this research, it is hoped that it can provide insights for start-up and existing entrepreneurs in developing a sustainable business, as well as contribute to the academic world regarding business adaptation strategies in the dynamic clothing industry.

This research aims to analyze the factors that influence the success of a clothing business and to identify strategies that can improve the sustainable competitiveness of this business. Specifically, this research has several main objectives including; (1) Identifying the main challenges in the clothing business, such as limited capital, stock of goods, and market competition. (2) Analyzing effective marketing strategies to attract and retain customers. (3) Examining the role of product innovation in increasing business attractiveness. (4) Find solutions in capital and stock management. (5) Develop strategic recommendations so that the business can grow sustainably.

This research has great significance in providing a deep understanding of the dynamics of the clothing selling business, by identifying success factors, challenges and effective marketing strategies and also to fill the gap in the literature that mostly discusses developed businesses. This research can add insight into how to build brand awareness, manage finances, and utilize digital technology to make small businesses more competitive. In addition to helping businesses, it can also provide references for the business community and policy makers in supporting the growth of MSMEs, so that they can contribute to broader economic development.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study method to analyze strategies and challenges in developing a selling business in the digital era. This research was conducted at Mrs. Khairunnisa's place on February 25, 2025. The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation of the activities of itinerant vegetable traders and in-depth interviews with business actors to find out marketing strategies, financial management, and constraints faced. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from various sources, such as research journals, business reports, and government policies related to micro businesses.

Data collection techniques were conducted through several methods, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were conducted with business owners to understand the business strategies they apply, the obstacles they face, and the solutions they use in developing a clothing business in the digital era. Interviews were also conducted with customers to understand the factors that influence their purchasing decisions. Participatory observation was conducted by directly observing how businesses run their businesses, especially in the aspects of digital marketing, interaction with customers, as well as stock management and logistics. In addition, documentation studies were conducted by collecting data from various sources, such as business reports, articles, and previous research related to apparel businesses in the digital era to gain additional insights into relevant business strategies and challenges

After the data was collected, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which consisted of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was done by selecting, summarizing, and categorizing data based on main themes, such as digital marketing strategies, capital and stock challenges, and online business competition. Data presentation was carried out in the form of descriptive narratives to describe how business actors face challenges and implement strategies in developing a clothing business in the digital era. Finally, conclusion drawing was done by identifying patterns found in the data and comparing them with theory and previous research to strengthen the validity of the research results.

To ensure data validity, this research used triangulation techniques, namely source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation is done by comparing data from various informants, such as business owners, marketing managers, and consumers. Technical triangulation is done by using more than one data collection method, such as interviews, observation, and documentation. Time triangulation is done by collecting data in several different times to see the consistency of the information obtained.

3. FINDINGS

According to this study, digital marketing tactics are crucial for growing clothing companies in the digital age. Paid advertising, influencer partnerships, and social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have all been shown to draw in customers and boost sales. Additionally, tactics like customer loyalty programs, email marketing, and content marketing help businesses succeed.

Businesses still have to deal with issues including low funding, a lack of knowledge and expertise in digital technology, heightened rivalry, and the challenge of producing interesting content. This study suggests using pre-order systems and dropshipping business models, increasing product innovation, and enhancing entrepreneurs' digital skills through training in order to overcome these obstacles. With the appropriate plan, prudent money management, and the ability to adapt to market trends, apparel businesses in the digital era have great potential to grow sustainably and competitively.

4. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. Marketing Strategy in Apparel Business Development

Today, marketing should be seen in the context of meeting client needs, not the old idea of making sales and selling. Says management guru Peter Drucker "The goal of marketing is to make sales unnecessary.". Marketing is defined in many different ways. The process of maintaining profitable client relationships is the most basic definition of marketing. Marketing can also be defined as the process by which businesses provide added value to their clients and build lasting relationships with them in order to gain value from them in return(Mubarok, 2017). The term "marketing strategy" refers to a set of goals, objectives, policies, and regulations that sometimes provide reference and direction for marketing efforts at every level. The term is specifically used to describe a company's reaction to changing competitive and environmental conditions.

The elements of marketing strategy are as follows (Mubarok, 2017):

- 1). The process of finding and creating a distinct set of buyers or consumers is known as market segmentation. Each customer is identified based on their unique marketing and product needs features.
- 2). The process of choosing which market sector to enter is known as targeting. The following segments need to be assessed in this targeting:
 - Segment growth and size: Businesses should assess information on the market demand, growth rate, and predicted profit of each segment.
 - Segment attractiveness: Businesses should consider the elements that affect the long-term attractiveness of each segment after determining the size and growth of the segment
 - Company goals and resources: A company must ensure its goals and resources if each part is to have the appropriate size and growth. If a business does not have the necessary resources to compete in a large and attractive area, it may not mean anything.
- 3). Market positioning is known as positioning, and its purpose is to create and convey to customers the competitive advantage of goods that are already available. The fundamental characteristic of a market positioning strategy is low or high price.

In times of fierce business competition, especially in the retail industry, a successful promotional plan is essential to attract attention and develop clients. Advertising, sales promotions, direct marketing, social media promotions, events or shows, and offering discounts or gifts are just some of the different ways to implement promotional techniques. Businesses seek to change consumer attitudes and behaviors through promotions in the hope that the tactics used will increase client loyalty and boost market share. In general, promotional techniques consist of four main components, or the "4Ps" (Artia Rahmawati, Ella, Vicky F Sanjaya, 2021):

1. Product (Determine the product or service to be promoted).
2. Price (Set prices that are competitive and attractive to customers).
3. Place (Determine distribution channels to reach the right market).
4. Promotion (Conduct effective promotional activities to attract attention and influence purchasing decisions).

Businesses can achieve marketing objectives, increase brand awareness, and maximize revenue by integrating these components into an efficient promotional approach (Pelanggan & Shop, 2024).

In addition, there is the utilization of social media as one of the marketing strategies.

According to previous research, social media is an online medium that people use to communicate and obtain information. Furthermore, social media can be used for community building and business purposes (Novie Rahmawati, 2023). This is in accordance with the results of the interview that the delivery of products offered through social media will create purchasing decisions can be proven. Social media allows us to watch some visuals such as photos or videos, read, write blogs, post uploads, and have online conversations (Newman et al., 2017). The importance of using social media as a marketing tool to promote the company's goods cannot be achieved with perfunctory methods. An effective social media account management strategy is determined by the activity on the account. A company's ability to respond promptly to inquiries from potential customers and consistently provide engaging material indicates that it is managing its accounts effectively. Effective social media management will increase a company's ability to influence consumer decisions. Millennials use Instagram as a way to communicate online in the modern era. Instagram provides capabilities that other social media applications do not have, although social media is more than just Instagram as an online communication tool (et al., 2023). There are several digital marketing strategies that are most commonly used:

1. The creation and promotion of content assets with the aim of increasing brand exposure, traffic, lead generation, and customer base is referred to as content marketing.
2. Email Marketing: Businesses can communicate with their audience by using email marketing. Emails are often used to direct customers to a company's website and advertise events, promotions, and content. Email marketing campaigns can use different types of emails, such as newsletters for blog subscribers, follow-up emails for website visitors who download content, welcome emails for customers, holiday specials for loyalty members, and similar email series to nurture customers.
3. To increase brand awareness, boost traffic, and create leads for a business, social media marketing is used to promote brands and content on social media platforms. Social media marketing channels include Google+, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

Customers can use social media to obtain information whenever and wherever they need it. Social media users are increasing every day, which provides opportunities for SMEs to expand their markets directly from the convenience of their smartphones (Hasan et al., 2022).

2.2. Challenges in the Apparel Business in the Digital Age

Technological advances enable automation in almost all fields. New technologies and approaches that combine the physical, digital and biological worlds will fundamentally change the patterns of human life and interaction. *Wolter* identifies the following industry challenges: First, information technology security issues. Second, reliability and stability. Third, the lack of adequate skills and Fourth, the reluctance to change by stakeholders and the loss of many jobs due to automation. In contrast to *Irianto* who tried to simplify the challenges of the industry, namely: industrial readiness, trusted labor, ease of regulation of cultural matters and diversification and job creation. as for the solutions still according to Irianto are: existence innovation, competitive industrial base, investment in technology and integration of small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship (Anwar, 2019).

Today, the apparel industry must be able to compete in the digital world in addition to having stylish designs and high-quality materials. Businesses need to be more inventive and flexible given the growing number of online retailers, social media, and rapidly changing trends. Selling goods is only one aspect of the problem; the other is attracting customers' attention in a highly competitive market. There's no denying that internet businesses also contribute to business growth by offering opportunities for entrepreneurs, both new to the industry and more experienced. Of course, there are drawbacks, such as the possibility of hacking and fraud from both producers and consumers.

Several challenges and barriers to the use of social media. Some of them are as follows (Donoriyanto et al., 2023):

(1) Limited Digital Knowledge and Skills

Due to a lack of technical expertise, startups and small businesses find it difficult to use social media to promote their online storefronts. If they don't know how to use social media platforms appropriately, it can be difficult to reach the target audience and optimize product marketing when using it to sell their goods and services.

(2) Financial Limitations

One of the difficulties entrepreneurs often face when utilizing social media to advertise their online stores is financial constraints. Depending on the target market and the platform used, social media advertising can be quite expensive. This limited resource can be a major obstacle in marketing goods and services for entrepreneurs with limited finances. There are additional costs in addition to the costs associated with advertising. Effective promotions are limited by these financial constraints, which also tend to make them less competitive in the online marketplace.

(3) Intense competition

Social media is becoming a widely used medium to promote products or services in the internet business world. However, its popularity has also led to stiffer competition among businesses. This is due to the fact that anyone can advertise their goods or services on social media. As a result, more and more companies are competing to attract potential clients.

(4) Difficulty in providing engaging content

To attract their target audience, manufacturers using social media for marketing must be able to provide interesting and relevant material. However, not all businesses have the talent

and inventiveness to deliver engaging content. This can make it difficult for them to use social media for marketing. Certain businesses also struggle to provide engaging content that stands out from the competition because they don't have an adequate creative team.

Competition from competitors to create various technologies and services to survive in the local market and compete in the global market is another difficulty for entrepreneurs in this digital era. To compete with other businesses, entrepreneurs must develop their capacity for creative and inventive thinking to come up with interesting concepts that can be integrated with the latest digital technology. However, an entrepreneur's business will be slightly hampered if he does not do this, as he will not be able to compete with his rivals who can overcome the difficulties of the digital market., entities should study the literature and innovate using technology to adapt to the rapid development of digital technology (Rohmana, 2023).

2.3. Solutions and Recommendations for Overcoming Challenges in Business

Customer impressions of the brand can be enhanced and brand awareness increased by running relevant and consistent promotions. Furthermore, loyalty programs that offer exclusive incentives and discounts also contribute to increased client loyalty. Carefully thought-out promotions not only promote repeat business but also deepen customers' emotional bond with the company. Businesses can maximize promotional methods to achieve lasting effects and be relevant to market demands by understanding the many components and difficulties involved.

Here are some effective ways to increase promotion (Pelanggan & Shop, 2024):

a). Use Social Media to the Fullest

- (1) Use social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or X (Twitter), Shopee, and Tokopedia to advertise your products. Provide interesting, engaging, and relevant content to your viewers. To reach more people, utilize features such as stories, live streaming, or sponsored ads.
- (2) Work with influencers who have a similar audience to your target market to utilize influencer marketing.

b). Provide Special Offers and Discounts

- (1) Customers can be persuaded to buy more through offers such as rebates, product packages, discounts, or freebies. To create urgency, make the offer limited (for example, only available for a certain period of time).
- (2) To make loyal customers feel valued and increase the likelihood that they will buy again, consider offering loyalty programs or discounts.

c). Hold a Raffle or Contest

Using social media to host contests or sweepstakes can be a great method to reach a larger audience and increase customer engagement. Make sure that the prizes are attractive and match the advertised items.

d). Create an Attention-grabbing Ad

Create Attention-grabbing Ads Whether in print, television, or digital media, attention-grabbing and imaginative ads can help raise awareness of products. Ensure that the ad grabs the viewer's attention and accurately conveys the value and benefits of the product.

e). Provide satisfactory support and reviews

Consumer confidence in the product may increase as a result of positive reviews left by previous users. Showcase customer reviews on your website or social media pages to provide social proof that can influence judgments about what to buy.

f). Participate in Events or Exhibitions

Attending exhibitions or events can be a good method to introduce products to customers directly, interact directly with them, and provide a more personalized explanation of product advantages.

In facing challenges in the business world, it is important to be mentally prepared and a well-thought-out plan is essential when facing obstacles in the corporate world. To improve knowledge and skills in the areas of product development, marketing, and financial management, one important step is to attend various business training programs. Making the right choices and maintaining confidence in a competitive environment also requires a strong personality and business philosophy. To ensure that every decision is based on thorough analysis and not just momentary emotions, it is also important for business people to manage their emotions. In the business world, adaptive tactics and good adaptive capacity are essential in the business sector when facing various issues, including changing market trends, intense competition, and unstable economic situations. Developing a wide network is also important to increase opportunities and resolve current issues. Furthermore, for an organization to be competitive and relevant in rapidly changing times, innovation must be used consistently. A businessperson will be better prepared to face various obstacles and achieve success in the business world by applying these principles.

5. CONCLUTIONS

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The purpose of this study is to examine the tactics and obstacles in starting a clothing sales company in the digital era. The utilization of digital marketing technologies and tactics is an important component in improving the competitiveness of companies in an increasingly competitive world. It has been proven that various strategies, including the use of social media, digital advertising, partnerships with influencers, and creative product design, can attract customers and increase sales. In addition, companies with limited funds and inventory can find solutions in business models such as dropshipping and pre-order platforms.

However, the study also found that there are still many obstacles to be faced in doing business in clothing as well as others in today's digital era. The main challenges that need to be overcome include fierce competition, rapid trend changes, and challenges in cultivating client loyalty. Businesses also need to take into account the security risks of online transactions and the lack of expertise in digital marketing.

Therefore, this study recommends that businesses continue to improve their digital skills, strengthen their marketing plans, and adjust to changing market conditions by introducing relevant new products. In the digital age, prudent capital management, efficient stock management, and excellent customer service are equally important to a company's success. A selling business can grow sustainably and benefit its participants in the long run with the right approach and a willingness to overcome obstacles.

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