Experiences And Perceptions Of Msme Entrepreneurs In Using E-Commerce Services As A Sales Platform In Indonesia: A Qualitative Approach To The Culinary Sector
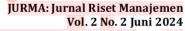
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This research aims to examine the experiences and perceptions of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) entrepreneurs in using e-commerce services as a sales platform in Indonesia, with a special focus on the culinary sector. Using a qualitative approach, this research involved in-depth interviews with a number of MSME culinary entrepreneurs to collect data regarding motivations, challenges, benefits and impacts of using e-commerce on their businesses. The research results show that e-commerce provides significant opportunities for culinary MSMEs to expand markets and increase sales. However, entrepreneurs also face various obstacles such as lack of technological knowledge, difficulties in logistics, and intense competition. This study concludes that although there are challenges that must be faced, the use of e-commerce can be an effective tool for developing MSME businesses in the culinary sector, provided there is adequate support in terms of education and technological infrastructure. These findings provide important insights for stakeholders in designing policies and programs that support the adoption of e-commerce by MSMEs in Indonesia.

Keywords: MSMEs, e-commerce, culinary sector, Indonesia, entrepreneur perceptions, sales platforms, qualitative approach.

A. Introduction

The culinary MSME business in Indonesia has faced significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Research shows that the pandemic has caused a decline in culinary MSME sales turnover, encouraging MSME players to market their products optimally and

innovate (Wan Laura Hardilawati, 2021). In this context, survival strategies are the key for culinary MSMEs to continue to exist in the midst of a pandemic, with approaches such as using the internet and creativity in product marketing (Saragih et al., 2021). Apart from that, blockchain education is also considered important to improve the sustainability of culinary MSME businesses in Indonesia (Setiawan, 2019).

Empowering MSMEs in the culinary sector during the COVID-19 pandemic is also a focus, where involving various parties such as business partners, academics and local governments is expected to support local economic growth and have a positive impact on local communities (Rendra et al., 2023). The adoption of e-commerce is felt positively by MSMEs because of its various benefits such as increasing marketing activities, expanding markets, increasing sales, improving company image, and streamlining processes (Kosadi et al., 2021). In an effort to support the culinary success of MSMEs, the application of technology such as e-business and big data has also become relevant. The use of e-business has been proven to increase MSME business interest and activity in Indonesia (Thaha & Kuncoro, 2022).

Meanwhile, consumer sentiment analysis using big data can provide valuable insights for MSME players in the culinary sector in increasing their competitiveness (Fauzi et al., 2021). Thus, through innovative survival strategies, use of technology, education and cross-sector collaboration, culinary MSME businesses in Indonesia can continue to develop and survive amidst the challenges they face.

The experiences and perceptions of MSME entrepreneurs in utilizing e-commerce services as a sales platform are very important to understand the dynamics of digital business adoption. Research has highlighted various factors that influence MSME engagement with e-commerce. Experience and perception play an important role in how entrepreneurs view social media platforms as business tools (Hamid et al., 2016). The important role of the optimistic attitude of individual MSME actors in shaping their perception of the ease of use of e-commerce services (Riswandi & Permadi, 2022). Cultural transformation is necessary for MSMEs to shift from traditional purchasing methods to online shopping, thereby increasing sales and market reach (Prameswari et al., 2017). Other research discusses the impact of electronic payments and e-commerce services on MSME supply chain performance, advocating open innovation to accelerate digitalization (Kilay et al., 2022). In addition, identifying barriers and facilitators that influence the e-commerce sustainability of Thai MSMEs, emphasizing the importance of exports and e-commerce experience (Amornkitvikai et al., 2022). These insights collectively underscore the multifaceted nature

of MSME entrepreneurs' interactions with e-commerce platforms, encompassing technology readiness, cultural shifts, supply chain improvements, and sustainability considerations.

B. Research Methods

1. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative design with the aim of exploring the experiences and perceptions of MSME entrepreneurs. One approach that can be used is a case study, where you select several MSME entrepreneurs in the culinary sector who use e-commerce services as research subjects.

2. Data Collection

a. Interview

The main method for collecting data used in this research is interviews. This interview can be conducted face to face or via telephone/video call. Prepare a structured or semi-structured interview guide that includes questions about the experiences, perceptions, benefits, challenges and expectations of MSME entrepreneurs regarding the use of e-commerce services.

b. Observation

This research conducted direct observations of MSME entrepreneurs when they used e-commerce services or interacted with customers.

3. Sampling Technique

The sample in this research is MSME entrepreneurs in the culinary sector who use e-commerce services as a sales platform. The selected sample represents a variety in terms of business size, product type, and level of experience using e-commerce.

4. Data Analysis

a. Interview Transcription

The researcher documented the complete interview transcription to facilitate data analysis.

b. Thematic Analysis

This research uses thematic analysis to identify thematic patterns in interview data. Identify recurring themes and relate findings to research objectives and relevant theoretical frameworks. Create thematic codes and categories to organize data and express findings systematically.

c. Triangulation

Triangulation is used to verify and strengthen the validity of research findings; by comparing conclusions from interviews with observations or with other data sources such as related documents or records.

C. Research Results

1. What is your experience in using e-commerce services as a sales platform for your culinary business?

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

Currently I use the Grabfood, Gofood, Instagram and WhatsApp platforms. Selling online is certainly very helpful for me, because the food I sell may not be as well known compared to similar food that is already available in malls-2

b. Cake Village Coordinator

The sales process via e-commerce has been carried out using the Sopee or Grab Food platforms. These two platforms have proven the ease and convenience of online shopping. Through Sopee, customers can explore various products from various trusted sellers and enjoy a safe and practical shopping experience. Meanwhile, Grab Food, which was originally known as a food delivery service, has now developed into an e-commerce platform that provides various products ranging from daily necessities to fashion and electronics. With these two platforms, people can easily fulfill their needs without having to leave the house. The sales process via e-commerce via Sopee or Grab Food has proven to be an effective and efficient alternative in the modern shopping world.

2. What prompted you to start using e-commerce services as a sales tool?

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

The sales reach is wider than mine only through offline sales. In the past, when sales were only done conventionally, I was limited to customers who came directly to physical stores. However, with advances in technology and the internet, I can now reach potential customers in various parts of the world through online sales. Through e-commerce and social media platforms, I can expand my customer base more quickly and efficiently. By using the right digital marketing strategies, I can attract the attention of potential customers through online advertising, search engines and social media. Additionally, I can build relationships with existing customers via email,

instant messaging, and social media. So, by selling online, my sales reach has significant potential, allowing me to reach more potential customers around the world.

b. Cake Village Coordinator

The use of e-commerce has great hopes for making it easier for buyers to reach available products. In the ever-growing digital era, e-commerce has become a popular choice for many people to make purchases. Through e-commerce platforms, buyers no longer need to face geographic or time constraints. They can easily explore various products offered by various sellers in various locations. Just by using an electronic device and an internet connection, buyers can access online stores anytime and anywhere. They can conduct specific searches, compare prices, read customer reviews, and even make direct purchase transactions. Apart from that, e-commerce also provides convenience in shipping and order management. Buyers can choose the shipping option that suits their needs, and track delivery status in real-time. Thus, the use of e-commerce provides great benefits for buyers by making it easier for them to reach available products, increasing convenience, and saving time and energy previously required in conventional shopping.

3. How is the process of integrating and implementing e-commerce services in your culinary business carried out? What steps did you take?

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

First, I have to know what customers want, so the menu I offer is of course what buyers like. secondly, the menu offered must be varied so you don't get bored. Third, choose the application that is most profitable for me, especially those that don't have a lot of deductions. If necessary, there are no deductions. Fourth, promotion, usually from WA status or Instagram story.

b. Cake Village Coordinator

The first step is to understand the needs and characteristics of the local market in Kampung Kue Rungkut. The second is choosing an e-commerce platform that suits your needs and capabilities. The last thing is to update stock regularly.

4. How do you evaluate the effectiveness and success of using e-commerce services in increasing sales and growth of your culinary business?

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

I can evaluate various aspects of the business, including sales levels, through e-commerce. In the ever-growing digital era, e-commerce has become an important sales channel for businesses. Through e-commerce platforms, I can track and analyze

sales levels in detail. I can combine the number of products sold, revenue generated, and other data related to online sales transactions. By having access to this data, I can see sales trends over time, identify the products that customers are most interested in, and communicate the success of the marketing campaigns and sales strategies I have implemented. Additionally, through e-commerce, I can also obtain information from customer reviews, which can be an important resource in conveying customer satisfaction and identifying areas for improvement. By using data and information obtained from sales levels through e-commerce, I can make better decisions in optimizing marketing strategies, improving customer experience, and achieving success in my online business.

b. Cake Village Coordinator

The first thing to do is compare sales figures quantitatively to see whether there has been an increase after using e-commerce services. The second is to regularly check the number of visits to online stores, and also the average value of purchases. The final step is to evaluate whether the benefits obtained from using e-commerce services are commensurate with the costs incurred for their implementation.

5. What benefits do you feel in using e-commerce services as a sales platform?

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

The benefit I get is that sales are not only from left and right neighbors but also reach other areas, so of course there is an increase in turnover, although not too significant.

b. Cake Village Coordinator

With e-commerce services, I can reach customers outside the geographic area of Kampung Kue Rungkut. Apart from that, e-commerce services make it easy for customers to explore and buy products with just a few clicks. Not too many changes have occurred with e-commerce services.

6. What obstacles or challenges do you face in using e-commerce services in your culinary business?

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

The main obstacle is using the GrabFood and Gojek applications, I always ask my daughter to help me to update the menu, sometimes the application also has errors, it can't be closed, so there are some Gojek/Grab Food who still come to take orders, even though the shop is closed. Maybe it's also because the signal is not supported enough, so the application has an error. If via WhatsApp, usually the buyer already

knows each other well, so there aren't too many problems. The next obstacle is that the money I will receive will have to be deducted by the application, so I have to increase the price. Sometimes those who have bought offline like to say, how come it's different.

b. Cake Village Coordinator

Firstly, a slow or unstable internet connection can hinder the use of e-commerce services. Second, many traders in Kampung Kue Rungkut may not have sufficient technological skills to manage their online stores effectively. Finally, there are still costs associated with implementing and operating e-commerce services such as platform registration fees, shipping fees, online payment fees, and other costs that need to be considered.

7. How did you overcome these obstacles? Do you use special strategies or make adjustments in the use of e-commerce services?

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

The way I solve this problem, of course, is that I always learn, the easiest thing is to open and close the shop in the application, even though sometimes there are errors. Recalculating how much price I should display in the application, so that I don't lose out due to being cut by the application. The simplest way is to update your status on WA, there is no discount, you can still see who saved my contacts.

b. Cake Village Coordinator

In facing these difficulties, the cake village decided to carry out sales traditionally by accepting customers who came in person and using WhatsApp services

8. What is your perception of security and privacy when using e-commerce services? Are you worried about data leaks or online fraud

a. Owner of Kenari Kitchen

Yes, there is definitely fear, because when you make an application you are asked for KTP data and so on. But yeah, I don't want to, if you want to use the application you have to enter that data.

b. Cake Village Coordinator

Of course there are concerns about its use. The first is concern about identity theft. Then the second is concerns about the security of financial transactions when making online payments. And the last one is worried about the security of shipping goods purchased online

9. **How do you interact and relate with customers through e-commerce services? Is there a difference in terms of communication or customer service compared to conventional sales?**

a. **Owner of Walnut Kitche**

Very different, I usually just look at customer reviews, yes sometimes someone gives 1 star, but I don't know what the shortcomings are. If you're offline, you can directly ask what's missing. You can enter it directly. When I meet a buyer, I can chat, not just look at my cell phone.

b. **Cake Village Coordinator**

The differences that occur are:

1) Communication:

E-commerce: Communication between sellers and buyers in e-commerce is usually done via text messages, emails, or live chat features on e-commerce platforms. Communication is often written and indirect.

Conventional Sales: Communication in conventional sales in Kampung Kue can involve direct interaction between sellers and buyers, both in physical stores and at traditional market events. This interaction is more personal and direct.

2) Timings and Availability:

E-commerce: Shoppers can make purchases at any time, 24/7, because online stores can be accessed online at any time. However, the response from the seller may not be immediate.

Conventional Sales: Buyers must come to physical stores or markets during certain operating hours to make purchases. This direct interaction allows for a quicker response from the seller.

3) Customer service:

E-commerce: Customer service in e-commerce is often done through online customer support services, either via email, live chat, or customer service phone numbers. This service may take time to respond to customer questions or complaints.

Conventional Sales: Customer service in conventional sales in Kampung Kue can include direct interaction between sellers and buyers in shops or markets. Sellers can provide direct advice, explain products in detail, and provide more personalized service.

4) Feedback and Evaluation:

E-commerce: Buyers can provide feedback through product reviews on e-commerce platforms or through online feedback forms. This feedback can help sellers improve their services.

Conventional Sales: Feedback in conventional sales in Kampung Kue can be given directly by the buyer to the seller. This provides the opportunity for two-way communication and more direct feedback.

10. **How do you see the future of using e-commerce services in the culinary sector in Indonesia? Do you plan to continue using this service or are there other considerations?**

a. **Owner of Kenari Kitchen**

Yes, that's the era now, whether you like it or not, you're following along, even though you're still learning how to use the application. You can reach customers from everywhere.

b. **Cake Village Coordinator**

In carrying out business in Kampung Kue, we no longer use e-commerce services because using e-commerce requires a continuous management process such as updating inventory which must be carried out periodically and being prepared to answer questions from every customer, whereas in Jampung Kue there are still no administrative staff. who can manage the application.

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