

SYNERGY OF DIGITAL BRANDING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN INCREASING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF ISLAMIC-BASED MSMEs

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ABSTRACT

In the context of accelerating digital transformation, this article highlights the strategic potential of synergy between digital branding and information technology (IT) as a lever for the competitiveness of Islamic-based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2024) reveals that only 38% of the 65 million MSMEs in Indonesia have been digitized, leaving a significant gap in exploiting digital market opportunities. Digital branding serves as a strategic tool for building a strong brand identity, while information technology provides the necessary infrastructure for efficient operations. In the context of Islamic economics, MSMEs have great potential to utilize sharia principles in their business strategies, which not only enhances competitiveness but also contributes to societal welfare. The results of this study indicate that collaboration between digital branding and information technology can strengthen brand image, improve operational efficiency, and expand market reach.

Keywords: MSMEs, Digital Branding, Information Technology, Islamic Economics, Competitiveness

INTRODUCTION

Within the national economy, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) serve as the primary drivers of the economy. According to information from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, by early 2024, approximately 24.9 million MSMEs had joined the digital ecosystem out of more than 65 million existing MSMEs (Effendy dkk., 2024). This figure indicates that more than 60% of MSMEs have not maximized the use of digital platforms in marketing and sales, which prevents them from reaching a wider market. Amid rapid globalization and digital development, MSMEs in the tourism sector face serious challenges, including a lack of access to larger markets and a low understanding of contemporary marketing strategies (Syahbani dkk., 2024). This situation requires a new, more flexible and creative approach so that MSMEs can remain competitive and relevant.

Facing the development of the digital era, digital branding and information technology are important aspects that cannot be ignored. Digital branding is a strategic step to create and manage brand reputation in the digital world, including the use of social media, websites, and digital content to build a strong identity and instill trust in the minds of consumers. Based on data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in Indonesia is estimated to exceed 220 million people by 2024. Jurnal 369. This condition opens up a huge opportunity for digital branding, where Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) can strengthen their brand image and reach consumers on a wide scale. The collaboration between the right digital branding and information technology builds a strong foundation, where MSMEs not only appear attractive to buyers but also run operations intelligently and effectively.

Furthermore, Indonesia has a significant opportunity to develop an economic sector focused on Islamic economics. According to the latest data from the World Population Review 2025, several large countries still dominate the global Muslim population. (Zakaria dkk., 2025). Indonesia is now the country with the largest Muslim population, surpassing Pakistan with a total of 242.7 million people. With this enormous market potential, MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) in Indonesia have the

opportunity to leverage Islamic economic principles in their business strategies. The synergy between digital branding and information technology is key to increasing MSME competitiveness, especially in the increasingly digital era. Digital branding enables MSMEs to build a strong brand identity and reach a wider consumer base, while information technology provides the tools and platforms necessary to optimize operations and marketing.

In the context of Islamic economics, MSMEs play a vital role in creating jobs and revitalizing the community's economy. According to the journal (Berlilana dkk., 2020) Islamic economic-based MSMEs can improve their performance and competitiveness through the use of information technology. In addition, the journal (Octiva dkk., 2024) emphasizes the importance of utilizing information technology in improving operational efficiency and expanding the market reach of MSMEs. From an Islamic economic perspective, MSMEs must apply sharia principles in running their businesses, including in the use of information technology and digital branding. This concept not only presents halal products and services, but also emphasizes the values of ethics, justice, and blessings in accordance with sharia principles. Jurnal admin nur mannah. Combining sharia values with digital marketing and information technology can create promotions that are not only visually appealing, but also meaningful, and meet the specific needs of the Muslim community. Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth how strategic collaboration between digital marketing, information technology, and Islamic economic principles can substantially strengthen the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises, as well as provide a practical framework for more sustainable economic progress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Branding Concept

Digital branding is a brand communication strategy that utilizes digital technology to build, strengthen, and maintain a positive image of a business in the minds of consumers. Unlike conventional branding, digital branding utilizes social media, websites, applications, and e-commerce platforms to expand marketing reach and increase interaction with consumers. (Aaker, D. A., 2021). In the context of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), digital branding is a crucial tool because it can provide identity, differentiation, and added value to products. Previous research shows that digital branding not only increases business visibility but also strengthens consumer trust through consistent content, authentic narratives, and interactive communication strategies (Dwivedi, Y. K. dkk., 2021).

Digital branding has become a crucial strategy for MSMEs in building their identity and increasing competitiveness in the digital era. According to the journal (Sifwah et al., 2024) Digital branding involves using platforms like Google My Business and Instagram Business to increase brand visibility while facilitating direct interactions with consumers. Through relevant content and targeted digital advertising, MSMEs can build more personal relationships and effectively communicate the added value of their products. Social media-based digital marketing can eliminate geographic boundaries, allowing MSMEs to reach a wider market. (Mahadipta et al., 2021). Thus, the implementation of integrated digital branding not only strengthens brand strength but also becomes a key factor in the growth of small and medium-sized businesses in the digital economy.

Research by Dwivedi et al. confirms that digital branding can create deeper customer engagement, because consumers are now not only recipients of information, but also play an active role in shaping brand narratives through participation in social media, product reviews, and direct interaction with brands through digital platforms. (Dwivedi, Y. K. dkk., 2021). This concept is especially important for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which often face limited capital for advertising in conventional

media. Through digital branding, MSMEs can reach consumers at a more affordable cost, with more measurable strategies, and with greater promotional effectiveness.

Information Technology in MSMEs

Information technology (IT) plays a crucial role in improving the performance of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in today's digital era. In the journal (Farina & Opti, 2023) It is explained that IT not only improves operational effectiveness and efficiency but also helps reduce costs and increase the competitiveness of MSMEs. By utilizing accounting software and inventory management systems, MSMEs can prepare financial reports more quickly and accurately, which in turn supports better decision-making. Furthermore, the use of e-commerce platforms and social media as marketing tools, as described in the journal (Atmojo, 2022) enables MSMEs to expand their market reach both nationally and internationally. Thus, IT serves not only as a tool to increase productivity but also as a driver of innovation and market expansion, which are crucial for the sustainability and growth of MSMEs amidst increasingly fierce global competition.

The utilization of information technology (IT) in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector is a key factor determining competitiveness in the digital era. IT is no longer viewed merely as a supporting tool but has become the primary foundation for modern business transformation. Information technology encompasses hardware, software, networks, and application systems that manage data and information to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and service quality. In the context of MSMEs, IT adoption offers various benefits, ranging from digital recording of financial transactions, inventory management, e-commerce-based marketing, to leveraging social media to expand the market. (Putra, Y. & Pramono, A, 2021).

Widyastuti et al. argue that the use of IT can encourage MSMEs to be more adaptive and responsive to changes in the business environment, especially amidst increasingly fierce global competition. MSMEs that utilize digital technology can increase cost efficiency, accelerate distribution flows, and provide better customer service compared to MSMEs that still use manual methods. (Widyastuti N. dkk., 2022). For example, point-of-sale (POS) applications not only help record sales but also provide real-time financial reports, making it easier for businesses to make decisions. IT also opens up broader market access for MSMEs through digital platforms such as marketplaces and social media. With digital marketing strategies, MSME products can be recognized not only locally but also internationally. This aligns with a report from the Ministry of Cooperatives & SMEs, which noted that in 2021, more than 19 million MSMEs had utilized the digital ecosystem, and this number is targeted to increase to 30 million by 2024. (Kementerian Koperasi & UKM, 2021). This data demonstrates the significant role of IT in strengthening national economic resilience through the digitalization of MSMEs.

However, IT adoption in MSMEs still faces several challenges. These challenges include limited digital literacy, low human resource capacity, and limited access to technological devices. Putra & Pramono emphasized that many MSMEs still struggle to integrate IT due to limited knowledge and initial investment costs. (Putra, Y. & Pramono, A, 2021). Therefore, mentoring and training programs are crucial for MSMEs to optimize the sustainable use of technology. Given these dynamics, it is clear that IT plays a vital role in driving MSMEs towards a modern, efficient, and highly competitive business ecosystem. IT is not merely a tool, but a key driver of MSME digital transformation. If IT integration can be implemented effectively, Indonesian MSMEs will not only be able to survive in the domestic market but also have the potential to become important players in the global value chain.

MSMEs from an Islamic Economic Perspective

The main principle of Islamic economics is the achievement of maqasid al-shariah, namely the goal of sharia to safeguard religion, life, intellect, posterity, and property. MSMEs operating in accordance with sharia principles can be considered instruments for

achieving distributive justice and blessings in economic activities. (Antonio, M. S, 2020). Islamic economics emphasizes that business activities must be free from elements of usury (riba), gharar (uncertainty), and maisir (speculation). Therefore, Sharia-compliant MSMEs must prioritize honesty, transparency, and fairness in transactions. Karim (2021) emphasized that empowering Sharia-compliant MSMEs is a crucial step in reducing social disparities, creating halal jobs, and strengthening the Muslim economy. (Karim, A. A., 2021).

From an Islamic economic perspective, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in driving sustainable and equitable economic growth. A study by Putri et al. emphasized that zakat can be an effective instrument in empowering MSMEs. Productive zakat distributed to those entitled to it not only helps them improve their welfare but also contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly poverty alleviation. (Putri dkk., 2023). In this context, MSMEs function as an economic driving force that can reduce social disparities and improve people's quality of life.

The application of Islamic economic principles in digital businesses, such as financial inclusion through sharia fintech and crowdfunding platforms, provides broader access for MSMEs to obtain sharia-compliant funding. (Zakaria dkk., 2025). By prioritizing sharia values, MSMEs are not only oriented towards financial profit but also contribute to community welfare and environmental preservation. This creates a more sustainable and harmonious business ecosystem, in line with the ultimate goal of Islamic economics, which prioritizes the welfare of the people and social justice. (Fataron, 2022).

From an Islamic perspective, MSMEs are also viewed as a means of economic da'wah. Halal products, ethical services, and fair business systems can strengthen Islamic identity in the modern economic sector. Ismail & Firdaus (2022) stated that Islamic MSMEs have significant opportunities for growth with the support of Islamic financial systems, such as Islamic banking, BMT (Islamic microfinance institutions), and Islamic fintech. (Ismail, A & Firdaus, M, 2022). Therefore, the existence of Sharia-compliant MSMEs not only supports national economic growth but also ensures the social and spiritual sustainability of society. In other words, MSMEs, from an Islamic perspective, combine profit-oriented orientation with the values of blessing and welfare.

Synergy/Collaboration of Digital Branding and IT in MSMEs

Digital branding has become a crucial strategy for MSMEs in building their identity and increasing competitiveness in the digital era. According to the journal (Sifwah dkk., 2024) Digital branding involves using platforms like Google My Business and Instagram Business to increase brand visibility while facilitating direct interactions with consumers. Through relevant content and targeted digital advertising, MSMEs can build more personal relationships and effectively communicate the added value of their products. Social media-based digital marketing can eliminate geographic boundaries, allowing MSMEs to reach a wider market (Mahadipta dkk., 2021). Thus, the implementation of integrated digital branding not only strengthens brand strength but also becomes a key factor in the growth of small and medium-sized businesses in the digital economy.

The synergy between digital branding and information technology (IT) has become key to increasing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the digital era (Triwijayati dkk., 2023) Business innovation involving the adoption of digital technologies, such as e-commerce and data-driven decision-making, is crucial for driving the growth of MSMEs. This study shows that MSMEs that implement digital innovation strategies experience increased competitiveness and operational efficiency, despite facing challenges related to limited resources and digital skills. The success of MSMEs in adapting to digital technology depends heavily on their ability to overcome these challenges, which includes training and skills development necessary to optimally utilize technology (Nur Fitriana dkk., 2025). Case studies of successful MSMEs, such as Batik

Trusmi and Kopi Kenangan, demonstrate that combining a Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)-based marketing strategy with digitalization can increase customer loyalty and business growth. Furthermore, branding development through digital marketing, including logo redesign and Instagram account creation, has proven effective in increasing visibility and customer engagement (Arjang dkk., 2025).

Leveraging social media and collecting customer feedback through digital platforms opens up opportunities for continuous innovation and more accurate market research, forming the foundation for sustainable growth in a dynamic industry. (Yuwono & Kamilatu Naimah, 2024). For Islamic-based MSMEs, the synergy of digital branding and IT also strengthens Sharia values in business practices. For example, digital branding can be used to emphasize product halal certification, supply chain transparency, and ethical values in promotions. Meanwhile, IT can support product accountability and traceability through a digital recording system that complies with Sharia principles. (Mubarok, F., & Rahman, A., 2022). A study by Hasanah and Santoso (2021) showed that MSMEs that successfully integrated digital branding with IT experienced sales increases of up to 50% and expanded their market share. This means that the synergy between the two not only increases competitiveness but also strengthens the long-term existence of MSMEs (Hasanah, U & Santoso, I, 2021). Thus, the integration of digital branding and information technology is not merely a business strategy, but rather a crucial instrument for MSMEs in building sustainable competitiveness in line with Islamic economic principles.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method with a literacy approach to analyze the synergy between digital branding and information technology in enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic economic-based MSMEs. Using a qualitative approach, this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the practices and strategies implemented by MSMEs in utilizing digital branding and information technology, and their impact on their competitiveness in the market. The data used in this study is sourced from a literature review that includes articles, books, and journals relevant to the topics of digital branding, information technology, and Islamic economic-based MSMEs. These sources were drawn from academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect, as well as related reports published by research institutions and organizations focused on MSME development. This research covers the study period from 2020 to 2025, providing a comprehensive overview of the latest trends and developments in the synergy of digital branding and information technology among Islamic economic-based MSMEs.

RESULTS

The Role of Digital Branding in Strengthening MSME Identity

Digital branding plays a crucial role in strengthening the identity of Islamic-based MSMEs by developing a brand image consistent with Sharia-compliant values, which is essential for expanding market share and building customer trust. By combining digital branding strategies with Islamic economic principles, MSMEs can not only increase their competitiveness but also ensure sustainable growth in line with current market needs. Through social media platforms, websites, and digital marketplaces, MSMEs can showcase halal values and integrity, and build emotional connections with customers. Digital branding also enables better interactions between MSMEs and customers, improves service and product quality, and strengthens loyalty. Furthermore, digital branding offers a more cost-effective and measurable marketing method, which is particularly important for MSMEs with limited resources. Research shows that the integration of Islamic branding and financial technology can have a significant impact on business performance, highlighting the importance of integrating Islamic values into digital marketing strategies.

The development of information technology has transformed the way marketing is thought about, shifting the marketing concept from traditional methods to a globally connected digital world. Nowadays, technology has become an essential part of everyday life, so a digital marketing approach is key to the growth and survival of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Digital marketing, which encompasses a variety of interconnected and interactive marketing strategies, opens up the possibility of better interactions between producers, sellers, and buyers. The presence of MSMEs in the digital world is crucial because consumers are now more active online. MSMEs that are active online, use various social media platforms, and build online stores tend to benefit better in various ways, such as increasing revenue, creating jobs, and being able to innovate and remain competitive. (Alfaruqiy dkk., 2023).

Opportunities and Challenges of Digital Branding and Information Technology for MSMEs

The positive impact of utilizing information technology on marketing and operational strategies is significant, particularly in improving business performance. The implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) encourages increased competitiveness in various aspects, such as professionalism, productivity, financial accountability, speed of decision-making, access to global markets, research and development innovation, marketing effectiveness, and quality of customer service (Erni, 2024). The successful implementation of information technology in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of MSMEs can be seen from two main aspects: operations and marketing. Operationally, business processes become faster and more accurate thanks to financial recording, inventory management, and real-time reporting, which can reduce operational costs and increase time efficiency. Meanwhile, in marketing, MSMEs' market reach expands, from national to global, resulting in a significant increase in sales (Hasan dkk., 2025).

The synergy between digital branding and information technology in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, encompassing sales information systems, social media, and various platforms, collaborates to improve sales, marketing, and customer communication processes. The simultaneous use of various digital platforms, such as Tokopedia, Instagram, and Google Maps, has been shown to drive the rapid growth of MSMEs (Berlilana dkk., 2020). The use of accounting information systems (AIS) supported by IT also contributes to the performance of MSMEs, AIS provides accurate and timely financial information (Farina & Opti, 2023). Furthermore, the adoption of digital trends such as SMAC (SocialMedia, Mobile, Analytics, Cloud Computing) enables MSMEs to perform better data analysis. The overall positive impact of this synergy demonstrates that understanding and implementing digital branding and IT not only increases the value and competitiveness of MSMEs but also contributes to their overall revenue growth. (Octiva dkk., 2024)

The collaboration between digital branding and information technology (IT) has great potential to create added value for Islamic-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Research conducted in the journal (Berlilana dkk., 2020). This study shows that the synergy between IT and digital branding can significantly increase the competitiveness of MSMEs. Thus, implementing digital marketing as a marketing strategy also has a significant positive impact on MSME performance. Journal (Aditya & Rusdianto, 2023) emphasizes the importance of collaboration between business actors, government, and academic institutions to create an inclusive and sustainable ecosystem. This synergy not only increases productivity and innovation but also strengthens the identity of MSMEs in an increasingly competitive market, enabling them to achieve profitability oriented towards worldly and afterlife well-being.

However, in reality, Islamic economy-based MSMEs in Indonesia face significant challenges in adopting digital branding and information technology. One key challenge is access to capital, with many MSMEs struggling to secure the necessary funding to invest

in technology that can support the digitalization of their businesses. Furthermore, limited human resources (HR) are a major obstacle, as many MSMEs lack the knowledge and skills to utilize IT and digital branding (Aristawidia, 2020). In addition, consumer adaptation to products offered by Islamic economic-based MSMEs, high research and development costs to create environmentally friendly and sharia-compliant products are also obstacles for MSMEs (Fataron, 2022). In addition, limited infrastructure and regulations that support digital sharia transactions also become obstacles for MSMEs to operate effectively in the digital era (Effendy dkk., 2024).

Strategies for Addressing Digital Branding and Information Technology Challenges for MSMEs

In facing these challenges, Islamic-based MSMEs have significant opportunities for innovation and growth. With increasing awareness of the importance of environmentally friendly business and Islamic marketing ethics, MSMEs can leverage the collaboration between green marketing and Islamic marketing ethics. This can not only increase customer satisfaction but also provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace, supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Fataron, 2022). Furthermore, collaboration with Islamic financial institutions and the use of productive waqf can provide alternative funding sources to support digitalization and product innovation. Innovative strategies such as using social media for promotion and marketing can increase brand visibility and strengthen relationships with consumers. (Aristawidia, 2020). Therefore, collaborative efforts between the government, Islamic financial institutions, and communities are needed to provide the necessary training and support so that MSMEs can overcome these challenges and capitalize on the opportunities presented by the digital era.

To face challenges and capitalize on opportunities in the digital era, Islamic-based MSMEs need to adopt innovative strategies. First, to overcome the challenge of accessing capital, MSMEs can explore various alternative financing sources, including Islamic financial institutions that support digitalization, and utilize the concept of productive waqf as a source of funds. Furthermore, human resource training and empowerment must be a priority, with collaboration between the government, academia, and the private sector to improve digital literacy and marketing skills. In this regard, ongoing outreach regarding the importance of digital branding and information technology is essential, given the still low awareness among MSMEs of the benefits of branding in increasing competitiveness. (Aristawidia, 2020). Furthermore, MSMEs must innovate in environmentally friendly products and processes, in line with the principles of green marketing and Islamic marketing ethics, to increase customer satisfaction and create competitive advantages. (Fataron, 2022). By utilizing digital platforms to expand market reach, MSMEs can not only increase the visibility of their halal products, but also build a strong brand image based on Islamic values. (Wati dkk., 2023). Through a targeted approach, MSMEs can adapt to market dynamics and contribute to sustainable sharia-compliant economic growth.

An in-depth analysis of the successful synergy of digital branding and information technology in MSMEs demonstrates that the right approach can significantly impact business growth. A case study by TaseNyong demonstrated a 40% increase in revenue in six months by integrating various digital platforms such as its website, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This strategy not only expanded market reach but also improved operational efficiency by reducing customer response time from 24 hours to just two. This demonstrates that the integrated use of information technology can provide a substantial competitive advantage for MSMEs. (Beriliana dkk., 2020). On the other hand, the Meubel Rapi Sari case study highlights the importance of human resource training in utilizing digital marketing. After participating in training on creating Google Business and Instagram accounts, their online sales increased by 65%. Furthermore, savings on conventional advertising costs reached IDR 5 million per month, demonstrating that investing in digital literacy can yield significant returns (NAIMAH dkk., 2020). The findings

from these various case studies confirm that the synergy between information technology and digital branding must be tailored to product characteristics, human resource availability, and digital access to achieve optimal results.

The synergy between digital branding and information technology (IT) is a crucial foundation for the sustainability and growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the digital era. Digital branding encompasses brand identity development, content strategy, and online promotion. IT provides the infrastructure and social media platforms for direct interaction with consumers and the dissemination of visual content, as well as digital marketplaces as sales and distribution channels. Without IT, digital branding efforts would be limited to theoretical concepts. IT transforms these concepts into practical applications, enabling MSMEs to manage business accounts, create promotional content, and analyze their performance. (Indriani dkk., 2024). Enables MSMEs to expand their market reach beyond geographical and time constraints. By leveraging IT, MSMEs can create engaging promotional content, interact directly with consumers, and manage transactions efficiently. With IT, MSMEs can analyze consumer data to understand the market, conduct marketing, and optimize promotions. Utilizing IT in digital branding also enables MSMEs to build stronger relationships with customers through two-way communication, ultimately fostering consumer trust and driving sustainable business growth. (Zuliawati Zed dkk., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this analysis indicates that the synergy between digital branding and information technology (IT) is crucial for enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic-based MSMEs. Digital branding consistent with Sharia values not only strengthens brand identity but also expands market share and builds customer trust. To optimize digital branding, MSMEs are advised to explore alternative financing sources, such as Islamic financial institutions and productive waqf (endowments), and to improve digital literacy through training involving the government and the private sector. Furthermore, MSMEs need to innovate in environmentally friendly products and processes, in line with green marketing principles and Islamic marketing ethics. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of digital branding and IT on MSME performance and to identify more effective strategies to address the challenges faced by MSMEs in the digital era. With a targeted approach, MSMEs can adapt to market dynamics and contribute to the sustainable growth of the Islamic economy.

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