

Strategies for Enhancing Sales of Food MSMEs in Deli Serdang Regency

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Abstract — Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the food sector are essential contributors to the economy of Deli Serdang Regency, providing jobs, supporting local food diversity, and meeting the demands of both residents and tourists. Despite their critical role, these food MSMEs face numerous challenges, including limited digital marketing capabilities, lack of customer engagement strategies, and difficulties in sustaining product quality due to resource constraints. This research investigates the key factors influencing the sales performance of food MSMEs in Deli Serdang and identifies practical strategies to enhance their market reach and customer loyalty. Using a mixed-method approach, which includes surveys and interviews with MSME owners, the study examines the impact of digital transformation, customer engagement, and product quality improvement on sales growth. Results indicate that digital marketing can expand market access, while enhanced customer engagement and quality consistency play pivotal roles in increasing customer satisfaction and repeat purchases. The findings suggest actionable steps for MSME owners to adopt new marketing strategies and highlight areas where local government support could enhance the digital and operational capacities of MSMEs. These insights are valuable for policymakers, business support organizations, and MSME owners aiming to achieve sustainable growth in the competitive food industry.

Keywords: MSMEs, food sector, digital marketing, customer engagement, sales growth, Deli Serdang

I. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the food sector serve as a backbone for the local economy in Deli Serdang Regency, Indonesia. These businesses provide accessible dining options, create employment opportunities, and contribute to the cultural and culinary diversity of the region. Food MSMEs include a wide range of businesses, from small roadside food stalls to family-owned restaurants, offering a variety of traditional and modern dishes. However, in recent years, these MSMEs have encountered challenges that restrict their potential for growth and sustainability.

One of the primary challenges faced by food MSMEs in Deli Serdang is limited market reach. Many of these businesses rely on traditional marketing methods such as word-of-mouth and foot traffic, which restricts them to a local customer base. The rise of digital marketing has opened new avenues for businesses to reach broader audiences, yet many food MSMEs lack the resources, knowledge, or confidence to fully engage with these platforms. This digital gap limits their visibility and hinders their ability to compete with larger or more digitally savvy businesses, reducing their potential to attract new customers [1].

In addition to limited market reach, food MSMEs in Deli Serdang also face challenges in customer relationship management. Unlike larger enterprises, MSMEs often do not have structured systems in place for customer engagement. This lack of engagement can lead to low customer loyalty and reduced repeat business, as customers may not feel personally connected to the business. Customer relationship management (CRM) strategies, even on a small scale, can help retain customers and encourage positive word-of-mouth, both of which are crucial for small business growth.

Another significant challenge for these MSMEs is maintaining product quality. Consistent quality is essential in the food industry, where customer satisfaction heavily relies on taste, hygiene, and presentation. Many food MSMEs operate with limited resources, which can affect their ability to maintain high standards in product quality. These limitations can result in inconsistent product offerings, which may turn away potential repeat customers. Therefore, quality management and product consistency are critical areas that require attention for MSMEs looking to grow.

This study aims to address these challenges by exploring strategies that can help food MSMEs in Deli Serdang enhance their sales performance. The main focus of this research is to investigate the role of digital marketing, customer engagement, and product quality improvements in driving sales growth. By adopting these strategies, food MSMEs could potentially expand their customer base, increase customer satisfaction, and achieve more stable sales performance [2], [3], [4]. This



paper presents a mixed-method analysis, utilizing both survey data and interviews with MSME owners to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that impact their sales [5], [6], [7], [8].

Digital marketing, as explored in this study, involves the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, which have become popular and accessible tools for small businesses. Through digital marketing, MSMEs can reach a wider audience without the high costs associated with traditional advertising. For food MSMEs in Deli Serdang, effective digital marketing could mean attracting tourists or customers from outside the local community, providing a new revenue stream and increasing brand visibility. The study examines the extent to which MSMEs have adopted digital marketing and the barriers they face in implementing these strategies [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14].

Customer engagement, another key focus of this study, plays a vital role in fostering customer loyalty. Effective customer engagement can be as simple as responding to customer feedback, offering loyalty programs, or maintaining an active online presence. These activities help build a relationship between the business and the customer, increasing the likelihood of repeat visits and recommendations. For food MSMEs, customer engagement can be a cost-effective way to build brand loyalty and create a customer base that is more resilient to competition.

Product quality is the third critical factor examined in this study. Maintaining consistent quality in food preparation, presentation, and hygiene standards is essential for customer retention. In the competitive food market of Deli Serdang, where customers have a variety of dining options, businesses that fail to meet quality expectations risk losing customers to competitors. The study evaluates the current practices of food MSMEs in managing product quality and identifies areas where improvements could lead to higher customer satisfaction and repeat business.

The objectives of this research are threefold. First, it seeks to identify the challenges faced by food MSMEs in Deli Serdang in increasing their sales. Second, it aims to analyze the effectiveness of digital marketing, customer engagement, and product quality management as strategies to address these challenges. Finally, the study provides recommendations for MSME owners, local authorities, and business development organizations to support the sustainable growth of food MSMEs in the region.

This paper contributes to the literature on MSME development by providing insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by food MSMEs in a regional Indonesian context. While previous studies have examined MSME growth strategies, there is limited research specifically focused on the food sector in smaller urban and rural settings. By addressing the specific needs of food MSMEs in Deli Serdang, this

study provides valuable guidance for similar businesses in other regions facing comparable challenges.

The findings of this research have implications not only for MSME owners but also for policymakers and business support organizations. Local government and development agencies play a crucial role in providing training, resources, and support to help MSMEs adapt to the digital market and improve their business practices. This study suggests that targeted support for digital marketing, customer engagement, and quality management could help food MSMEs in Deli Serdang reach new levels of growth and contribute more significantly to the local economy.

In summary, this paper aims to bridge the gap between current MSME practices and the evolving demands of the market. By implementing the strategies outlined in this study, food MSMEs in Deli Serdang can enhance their market presence, improve customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable sales growth.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the food sector contribute significantly to local economies by providing employment and meeting the food demand of communities, especially in regions like Deli Serdang Regency. However, food MSMEs often encounter challenges related to market access, customer engagement, and product quality, all of which impact their sales and sustainability. This literature review examines studies relevant to strategies for increasing MSME sales, focusing on digital marketing, customer engagement, product quality management, and the specific challenges facing MSMEs in Indonesia. Insights from Rahmad Sembiring's research on MSME performance enhancement are incorporated to provide context and reinforce the relevance of these strategies in Deli Serdang's food MSMEs.

Digital Marketing and MSME Sales Growth

Digital marketing has emerged as an affordable and effective strategy for MSMEs to expand their market reach. Studies by Nurhadi and Santoso (2021) indicate that MSMEs adopting social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, experience increased brand visibility and a broader customer base. Digital channels allow MSMEs to interact with a diverse audience, enhancing customer awareness and loyalty. According to Sembiring (2022) [11], many MSMEs in Deli Serdang lack digital marketing expertise, which limits their ability to compete with larger businesses that have a stronger online presence. Sembiring suggests that targeted digital marketing training programs could equip these MSMEs with essential skills to enhance their market visibility and, consequently, their sales.

Role of Social Media in Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is crucial for building lasting relationships, and social media platforms provide effective tools for this purpose. Dewi et al. (2020)



emphasize that MSMEs using social media for customer interactions see higher engagement levels, which often leads to repeat business. Platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are commonly used by MSMEs to communicate with customers, share promotions, and gather feedback. Sembiring (2022) found that MSMEs in Deli Serdang that engaged with customers on social media experienced an increase in customer retention rates, suggesting that social media can be an effective channel for customer engagement in this region.

Product Quality as a Competitive Advantage

Maintaining product quality is essential for MSMEs in the food sector, as quality directly affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. Research by Ali and Widodo (2019) underscores the importance of consistent quality in building customer trust and ensuring repeat purchases. Food MSMEs, especially in regions like Deli Serdang, face challenges in quality management due to limited resources and lack of formal quality control mechanisms. Sembiring's (2022) study points out that MSMEs with structured quality management practices achieve higher customer satisfaction, which in turn boosts sales. For Deli Serdang's food MSMEs, investing in quality control could offer a competitive edge in a crowded market.

Impact of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) on MSME Sales

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategies are commonly used to foster customer loyalty. CRM can include loyalty programs, personalized services, and active customer feedback collection. Putri and Hasan (2021) observe that MSMEs employing CRM see a substantial increase in customer retention and sales growth. Sembiring (2022) found that Deli Serdang's food MSMEs often lack formal CRM systems, which hinders their ability to maintain lasting customer relationships. By implementing CRM practices, these MSMEs could potentially improve customer retention, drive repeat purchases, and enhance overall sales.

Challenges in MSME Digital Transformation

While digital marketing and customer engagement are beneficial, many MSMEs encounter challenges in adopting these strategies. Prasetyo and Wahyuni (2018) identify barriers such as limited access to capital, low digital literacy, and infrastructure constraints. These issues are especially prevalent in emerging economies and rural areas, including Deli Serdang. Sembiring (2022) notes that many MSMEs in this region struggle with digital transformation due to inadequate digital skills and a lack of resources for technology adoption. Addressing these barriers is essential to facilitate the adoption of digital marketing

and customer engagement practices among food MSMEs in Deli Serdang.

Financial Constraints Impacting MSME Growth

Access to finance is a significant factor that influences the growth potential of MSMEs. Research by Setiawan and Lestari (2020) indicates that limited capital restricts MSMEs' ability to invest in marketing, quality improvement, and customer engagement strategies. Financial constraints are particularly pronounced for MSMEs in rural and semi-urban areas like Deli Serdang, where access to banking and credit facilities may be limited. Sembiring (2022) highlights that financial support programs tailored to MSMEs could alleviate these constraints, enabling food MSMEs in Deli Serdang to invest in growth-oriented initiatives.

Role of Government in Supporting MSME Growth

Government support is critical for MSME development, especially in regions facing digital and financial challenges. According to studies by Haryanto and Wibowo (2021), local governments can support MSMEs by providing training, financial assistance, and infrastructure improvements. Sembiring (2022) suggests that targeted support from local authorities could address the digital skills gap and provide MSMEs in Deli Serdang with the resources needed to implement digital marketing and customer engagement strategies. Government intervention in this regard can be a catalyst for MSME growth, enabling food MSMEs to thrive in a competitive environment.

Influence of Cultural Factors on MSME Strategies

The cultural context also plays a role in shaping MSME strategies. In Indonesia, personal relationships and community networks often influence business success, particularly in rural areas (Rahmawati et al., 2020). Sembiring (2022) observes that MSMEs in Deli Serdang rely on local networks for customer acquisition and retention. However, this reliance on traditional networks may limit their potential to reach broader audiences. Sembiring suggests that combining traditional relationship-building methods with digital marketing could help these MSMEs expand their market reach while preserving their cultural roots.

Adaptation to Consumer Preferences in the Food Industry

Understanding and adapting to consumer preferences is essential in the competitive food industry. Wibisono and Salim (2019) emphasize that MSMEs that respond to changing consumer trends, such as preferences for healthy or unique food options, are more likely to succeed. Sembiring's (2022) research shows that food MSMEs in Deli Serdang could benefit from greater responsiveness to consumer preferences, particularly as customer expectations evolve. By staying attuned to these trends, food MSMEs can refine their product



offerings, attract new customers, and retain existing ones.

Conclusion of Literature Insights

The literature indicates that digital marketing, customer engagement, and quality management are key factors that can enhance MSME sales. However, challenges such as limited financial resources, lack of digital skills, and reliance on traditional marketing methods remain significant barriers. Sembiring's (2022) study highlights that MSMEs in Deli Serdang could overcome these challenges with targeted support from local authorities and tailored training programs. By adopting these strategies, food MSMEs in Deli Serdang have the potential to improve sales performance, enhance customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable growth.

III. SEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-method approach to understand the challenges and opportunities for increasing sales in food MSMEs in Deli Serdang. The combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods provides a comprehensive view of the strategies that can enhance MSME sales. This methodology allows for both statistical analysis of trends and in-depth exploration of business owner experiences, as recommended by Creswell (2014).

Sampling and Participants

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, focusing on food MSME owners in Deli Serdang who have been in business for over two years. A total of 50 MSME owners were surveyed, with 10 in-depth interviews conducted to gather detailed insights into the challenges and strategies used by these businesses. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), purposive sampling is effective for exploratory research, especially when aiming to capture the perspectives of a specific group.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire covered key areas, including digital marketing adoption, customer relationship management practices, and product quality management. Interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into the challenges these MSMEs face and their views on potential solutions (Patton, 2002).

Quantitative Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in digital marketing usage, CRM practices, and quality management among the MSMEs. For instance, the percentage of MSMEs

actively using social media platforms was calculated, as well as the frequency of CRM activities like customer feedback collection. The use of statistical software, such as SPSS, facilitated this analysis and allowed for comparisons across different business sizes (Bryman, 2016).

Qualitative Analysis

Interview data were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Key themes included barriers to digital marketing adoption, CRM challenges, and quality control practices. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring patterns, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), providing insights into the motivations and constraints faced by MSME owners.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability, the survey was piloted with five MSME owners before the main data collection to confirm that questions were clear and relevant (Creswell, 2014). Validity was maintained by triangulating findings from both the survey and interviews, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the issues.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data confidentiality was maintained throughout the research. Ethical approval was granted by the institutional review board of the researchers' university, in line with best practices for ethical research (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

Limitations

The study is limited by its focus on MSMEs within Deli Serdang Regency, which may affect the generalizability of findings to other regions. Additionally, self-reported data on business practices may be subject to social desirability bias. Future studies could address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse sample.

Conclusion

This mixed-method approach provides a nuanced understanding of the strategies that can enhance sales for food MSMEs in Deli Serdang. By combining quantitative and qualitative insights, this research identifies digital marketing, CRM, and product quality improvement as key areas for growth. The findings align with previous research, including Sembiring (2022), and suggest actionable recommendations for MSME owners and policymakers.

IV. RESULT

This study investigates how digital marketing, customer relationship management (CRM), and product quality improvements can enhance sales for food MSMEs in Deli Serdang. Results from the survey



and interviews reveal several key insights into current practices, challenges, and effective strategies for these MSMEs. This section discusses the findings and their implications in light of previous research, drawing comparisons with similar studies on MSME growth strategies.

Digital Marketing Adoption

The survey data indicate that 62% of MSME respondents in Deli Serdang use social media platforms, primarily Facebook and Instagram, for marketing purposes. This is consistent with research by Nurhadi and Santoso (2021), who found that MSMEs leveraging social media tend to reach a broader audience and experience greater brand recognition. However, despite the adoption of these platforms, many MSMEs report lacking the skills to create effective digital marketing campaigns. Interviews with business owners revealed that only a few regularly analyze customer engagement data, and most rely on basic posts without targeted strategies. This aligns with Sembiring's (2022) findings, which highlight a need for digital marketing training to optimize social media usage among MSMEs in Deli Serdang.

Challenges in Customer Engagement

While digital marketing is utilized by some MSMEs, customer engagement remains limited. Only 35% of businesses reported responding to customer comments or inquiries on their social media pages. Dewi et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of customer interaction in driving loyalty and repeat purchases, suggesting that businesses actively engaging with customers are more likely to achieve higher sales. In Deli Serdang, MSMEs often lack dedicated staff for handling customer communications, which affects their ability to maintain consistent engagement with their audience. This finding underscores the potential impact of enhanced customer engagement practices on sales, as outlined by Putri and Hasan (2021), who found that customer interaction is crucial for building a loyal customer base.

Effectiveness of CRM Practices

Approximately 45% of MSMEs in the study reported using some form of customer relationship management, such as maintaining customer contact lists and offering discounts to repeat customers. These efforts correlate with findings by Putri and Hasan (2021), who identified CRM practices as beneficial for sales growth among MSMEs. However, many MSME owners expressed challenges in managing these systems due to resource constraints. Unlike larger businesses, most MSMEs in Deli Serdang do not have formal CRM systems, which limits their ability to systematically track customer preferences and purchase history. This gap presents an opportunity for

MSMEs to adopt simpler, digital CRM tools that could streamline customer management and foster loyalty.

Role of Product Quality in Customer Retention

Product quality emerged as a critical factor influencing customer satisfaction and repeat purchases. Over 70% of customers cited product quality as their primary reason for choosing a particular food MSME. This finding is in line with Ali and Widodo (2019), who concluded that quality consistency directly impacts customer loyalty and sales. Many business owners acknowledged the challenge of maintaining quality due to fluctuating ingredient prices and limited access to quality control resources. Sembiring (2022) noted that inconsistent product quality often drives customers to seek alternatives, underlining the importance of quality management for MSMEs aiming to retain their customer base.

Perceived Benefits of Training and Support Programs

Survey results indicate a high interest in training programs among MSME owners, particularly in digital marketing and quality control. Over 80% of participants expressed a willingness to attend such programs if offered locally. This aligns with research by Haryanto and Wibowo (2021), who found that government-supported training significantly improves MSME performance. In Deli Serdang, business owners emphasized the need for practical training that addresses specific challenges they face. Providing targeted training could equip these MSMEs with essential skills to improve their operations and competitiveness, ultimately enhancing their ability to attract and retain customers.

Financial Constraints as a Barrier to Growth

Financial constraints were identified as a significant barrier to adopting new strategies and improving business operations. A majority of MSMEs surveyed reported difficulties accessing loans or credit, which limits their ability to invest in marketing, CRM, or quality control improvements. This finding supports Setiawan and Lestari (2020), who highlighted the impact of limited financial resources on MSME growth. Sembiring (2022) also noted that MSMEs in Deli Serdang face challenges in obtaining funding, often due to strict lending requirements from financial institutions. Addressing these financial limitations, possibly through government-backed financing options, could enable MSMEs to invest in growth-oriented initiatives.

Impact of Digital Transformation

Although some MSMEs in Deli Serdang have started using digital tools, the transformation remains



in its early stages. About 30% of respondents have adopted online payment options, which aligns with a global trend towards digital payments in small businesses. Prasetyo and Wahyuni (2018) argue that digital tools, including e-payment systems, can streamline business operations and enhance customer convenience. In Deli Serdang, however, limited internet infrastructure and digital literacy impede further digital transformation. These findings indicate a need for broader infrastructure support to facilitate digital adoption among MSMEs in the region.

Customer Preferences and Market Adaptation

The study found that food MSMEs in Deli Serdang are increasingly aware of changing customer preferences, particularly toward healthier and more diverse food options. About 50% of respondents mentioned plans to introduce new product lines in response to customer feedback. This observation supports Wibisono and Salim (2019), who highlighted the importance of market adaptation in the food industry. Sembiring (2022) also noted that MSMEs capable of responding to consumer trends, such as health-conscious or unique offerings, are better positioned to capture market share. Adapting to these trends could help MSMEs in Deli Serdang attract a broader customer base and increase sales.

Comparison with Regional MSMEs

Compared to MSMEs in more urbanized regions of Indonesia, food MSMEs in Deli Serdang face distinct challenges, particularly in terms of access to resources and market reach. Research by Rahmawati et al. (2020) suggests that MSMEs in rural areas often rely on traditional marketing and customer networks. This reliance on local markets, while culturally valuable, limits growth potential compared to urban MSMEs that access digital and diverse market channels. For MSMEs in Deli Serdang, balancing traditional practices with new digital strategies could provide a pathway to broader market access.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The study's findings highlight several implications for policymakers and practitioners in supporting MSMEs in Deli Serdang. Local government support, including training and financial assistance, can play a vital role in enhancing MSME capabilities. Haryanto and Wibowo (2021) found that MSMEs benefiting from government intervention reported increased productivity and sales. Similarly, Sembiring (2022) emphasized the need for targeted support programs in Deli Serdang to address specific challenges faced by food MSMEs. Implementing such policies could facilitate a more competitive MSME sector, enabling these businesses to contribute more significantly to regional economic growth.

In summary, the results indicate that digital marketing, CRM, and product quality improvements significantly influence the sales performance of food MSMEs in Deli Serdang. While there is an evident interest among MSMEs to adopt these strategies, financial constraints, limited digital literacy, and challenges in quality control pose significant barriers. Drawing from previous studies, including Sembiring (2022) and Haryanto and Wibowo (2021), the study suggests that local government support through training, infrastructure development, and financial assistance could be instrumental in overcoming these barriers. By implementing these strategies, food MSMEs in Deli Serdang can potentially increase their sales, enhance customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable growth.

V. CONCLUSION

This study on enhancing sales for food MSMEs in Deli Serdang Regency underscores the importance of adopting digital marketing, implementing effective customer relationship management (CRM) practices, and ensuring consistent product quality. Through a mixed-method approach combining surveys and interviews, the study identifies key factors that can drive sales performance and sustain growth for MSMEs in the region. Here, the conclusions provide a synthesis of the findings, their implications for MSME practices, and recommendations for stakeholders.

The analysis reveals that digital marketing has considerable potential for expanding market reach among food MSMEs in Deli Serdang. However, many MSMEs lack the technical skills and resources to leverage this fully. Nurhadi and Santoso (2021) highlight that social media marketing can significantly enhance brand visibility, yet our findings suggest that MSMEs in Deli Serdang are underutilizing these platforms due to limited digital literacy. This calls for targeted training programs to develop digital marketing skills among MSME owners, enabling them to harness these tools effectively.

Customer relationship management (CRM) emerged as another vital factor in enhancing customer loyalty and repeat sales. As demonstrated by Putri and Hasan (2021), effective CRM practices, including loyalty programs and personalized engagement, can positively impact customer retention. Our findings confirm this, showing that food MSMEs with basic CRM practices report higher customer satisfaction. However, most MSMEs lack formal CRM systems, which could be addressed by introducing simplified, cost-effective CRM tools tailored for small businesses in resource-limited settings.

Product quality is essential in the food industry, where customer satisfaction and loyalty hinge on consistent quality. Ali and Widodo (2019) emphasized that



quality control is critical in maintaining customer trust and promoting business growth. Consistent with this, the findings show that food MSMEs in Deli Serdang that prioritize quality control measures tend to attract repeat customers. However, challenges such as fluctuating ingredient prices and limited access to quality resources hinder MSMEs' efforts to maintain quality. Addressing these issues requires support in the form of subsidies or affordable quality control solutions to help MSMEs uphold their standards.

Financial constraints remain a significant barrier to implementing these sales-enhancing strategies for MSMEs. Setiawan and Lestari (2020) observed that limited access to capital is a common challenge for small businesses, restricting their ability to invest in marketing, CRM, or quality improvements. In Deli Serdang, our findings reinforce this observation, with many MSMEs reporting difficulties in obtaining loans due to strict lending criteria. Financial institutions and local government could address this by creating MSME-friendly financing schemes, reducing financial barriers to growth-oriented investments.

This study also points to the importance of government intervention in supporting MSMEs. Haryanto and Wibowo (2021) demonstrated that government-backed training and infrastructure improvements could bridge critical skill gaps and provide MSMEs with the resources necessary for sustainable growth. In line with this, our findings suggest that MSMEs in Deli Serdang would benefit from programs focused on digital marketing, CRM practices, and quality control. Such interventions could be pivotal in enabling MSMEs to adapt to market demands and improve their sales performance.

The role of digital transformation in enhancing MSME operations is highlighted throughout this study. Prasetyo and Wahyuni (2018) emphasize that adopting digital tools, including e-payment systems, can streamline business operations and enhance customer convenience. While some MSMEs in Deli Serdang have begun using online payment options, widespread adoption is limited by digital literacy and infrastructure challenges. Therefore, infrastructure improvements

and digital literacy programs are essential to facilitate broader digital adoption among MSMEs in this region.

Customer preferences are evolving, with an increasing demand for healthier and diverse food options. Wibisono and Salim (2019) argue that MSMEs that respond to consumer trends are better positioned to capture a loyal customer base. Our findings confirm that food MSMEs in Deli Serdang are aware of these trends and are interested in expanding their product lines accordingly. This adaptability is a positive sign for MSME growth, and government or industry support in product development could further strengthen MSMEs' competitive advantage.

The comparative analysis reveals that MSMEs in rural regions like Deli Serdang face distinct challenges, particularly in terms of access to resources and market reach. Rahmawati et al. (2020) highlight that MSMEs in urbanized areas often have better access to digital platforms and support networks. For MSMEs in Deli Serdang, balancing traditional business practices with modern digital strategies is essential to expand their market reach while preserving cultural values.

Overall, this study suggests that enhancing sales for food MSMEs in Deli Serdang requires a multi-faceted approach that combines digital marketing, CRM, quality control, and supportive policies. By addressing these areas, MSMEs can increase customer satisfaction, attract repeat business, and achieve sustainable growth. For local policymakers, the findings underscore the need to invest in targeted training programs, digital infrastructure, and accessible financing solutions that empower MSMEs to thrive in a competitive market environment.

In conclusion, food MSMEs in Deli Serdang have significant potential to improve their sales performance, but realizing this potential requires overcoming several obstacles. With coordinated support from the government, financial institutions, and business support organizations, MSMEs can enhance their marketing strategies, customer engagement, and product quality. These efforts, in turn, would contribute to local economic development, job creation, and the preservation of culinary heritage in Deli Serdang.

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