

Optimising Digital Marketing Using Marketplaces to Increase Onion Sales at Wale Warehouse

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse and describe the digital marketing optimisation strategies implemented by Gudang Wale to increase onion sales through the Facebook marketplace. This study also identifies effective digital marketing strategies and reveals the obstacles faced in implementing digital marketing in this marketplace. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with 8 informants consisting of the owner of Gudang Wale, senior management, IT staff, digital marketing staff, operational staff, and regular consumers. Informants were determined using purposive sampling techniques. The results show that the digital marketing optimisation strategy is not yet fully effective, with the main obstacles including limited technological knowledge, inadequate IT infrastructure, and unattractive product displays. Although the use of the Facebook marketplace influences consumer behaviour, fierce competition and difficulty in finding products are challenges for consumers. Barriers to digital marketing optimisation impact the effectiveness of sales growth. Therefore, Gudang Wale needs to improve its digital strategy by utilising more advanced technology and enhancing the appeal of its content on the Facebook marketplace to overcome existing barriers and significantly increase onion sales.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As technology advances, digital transformation has brought significant changes to various sectors, including commerce and marketing [1]. In today's digital age, digital transformation has become a major driver of widespread change, particularly in the commerce and marketing sectors. These changes cover many aspects, from how consumers interact with products and brands to how companies execute their marketing strategies.

In the world of commerce, digitisation has fundamentally changed the way transactions are carried out [2]. Whereas previously transactions were mostly conducted face-to-face in physical stores, today, with advances in information and communication technology, consumers can easily make purchases online through websites or mobile applications. This not only provides easy access but also convenience for consumers to shop anytime and anywhere without being bound by time and place constraints.

Meanwhile, similar changes are also occurring in marketing. Traditional marketing, which used to rely on print media, television, or outdoor advertising, is now shifting to a digital approach. Companies are increasingly utilising online platforms such as social media, search engines, and marketplaces to reach a wider

audience [3]. Digital marketing allows companies to target consumers more specifically, understand their behaviour and preferences, and build more personal interactions. Marketing is no longer one-way but has become more interactive and data-driven.

One clear example of this digital transformation is the increased use of social media and marketplaces as primary marketing channels [4]. Platforms such as Facebook have become spaces for businesses to promote their products, build their brands, and interact directly with customers. Online marketplaces also provide opportunities for small businesses to reach larger markets without having to invest heavily in physical infrastructure.

This digital transformation not only impacts how companies conduct transactions but also creates new opportunities for innovation and efficiency in marketing strategies. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in increasingly competitive markets, the ability to leverage digital technology is a key factor for survival and growth [5][6]. Digital marketing, including the use of platforms such as Facebook marketplaces, has become highly relevant in helping SMEs expand their markets and increase sales [7][8].

Gudang Wale is an example of a business operating in the agricultural sector, specifically in the sale of shallots. Established in 2024, this warehouse is located at Jl. Bunga Teratai VII No. 7 and focuses its business on the distribution of high-quality shallots. The brand works directly with local shallot farmers, enabling it to offer more competitive prices while ensuring product freshness. With its large storage capacity, Gudang Wale can meet the needs of local and regional markets, including deliveries to several traditional and wholesale markets [8].

Over time, Gudang Wale began to see opportunities to expand its market reach through digital platforms. However, like many other MSMEs, the company faces challenges in optimising its digital marketing strategy. The use of traditional marketing methods, such as direct sales in physical markets and product distribution through wholesale networks, remains the mainstay. This creates limitations in reaching a wider customer base, especially outside the geographical area where they operate. In addition, traditional marketing requires high operational costs, which often burden small businesses in maintaining competitive profit margins [9][10].

With the potential of Facebook Marketplace as a digital marketing platform, Gudang Wale sees a great opportunity to expand its market reach. This marketplace not only allows them to reach new consumers outside their traditional operational areas but also provides flexibility in managing inventory online. Gudang Wale can promote its products without the need for large investments to open new physical branches. However, despite recognising the importance of digital marketing, Gudang Wale has not yet fully utilised its potential. They face difficulties in designing an effective digital marketing strategy and maximising the use of the Facebook marketplace to increase their shallot sales [11][12].

Changes in consumer behaviour are also an important factor in this study. Consumers today tend to prefer online shopping, especially through social media and e-commerce platforms. They expect convenience, speed, and transparency in the purchasing process. Therefore, effective digital-based marketing strategies and the utilisation of marketplaces are becoming increasingly important [13][14]. To remain relevant, Gudang Wale needs to adjust its marketing strategy to keep up with changing consumer behaviour trends [15][16].

In addition, traditional marketing, which Gudang Wale still relies on, has various limitations. The high cost of traditional marketing, limitations in reaching a wider market, and difficulties in measuring the effectiveness of marketing campaigns are major challenges. This shows the need to switch to more measurable and effective digital marketing in order to increase product visibility and interaction with consumers. By implementing an optimal digital marketing strategy, Gudang Wale can increase engagement with consumers and significantly boost their onion sales [17][18].

Therefore, this study will focus on how Gudang Wale can optimise their digital marketing, particularly through the use of the Facebook marketplace, to increase onion sales. This study aims to provide relevant practical insights for Gudang Wale. The results of this study are expected to provide practical guidance on effective digital marketing strategies, as well as provide input for small entrepreneurs on the importance of applying technology in developing their businesses [19][20].

Thus, the title of this study is "Optimising Digital Marketing Using Marketplaces to Increase Onion Sales at Gudang Wale."

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Approach and Type

This study adopts a qualitative approach, specifically using descriptive qualitative research, to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex aspects of digital marketing that cannot be captured quantitatively.

The qualitative approach is essential for exploring the implementation process, subjective experiences, and strategic perspectives of the business stakeholders (Gudang Wale) regarding their use of Facebook Marketplace to boost onion sales.

This descriptive qualitative method allows the researcher to:

- Comprehensively explore the phenomenon by gathering rich, detailed information from both internal (owners, marketing team) and external (customers) perspectives.
- Capture nuances, emotions, and social dynamics that are often missed by numerical data.
- Understand the specific context, including market dynamics, consumer preferences, and how the digital platform influences interactions between Gudang Wale and its consumers.

Through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, the research aims to deeply understand how the digital marketing strategy is designed, implemented, and the challenges encountered in optimizing Facebook Marketplace for sales growth at Gudang Wale.

2.2. Research Location and Time

The research was conducted at Gudang Wale, a central onion distribution warehouse located at Jl. Teratai VII No.7, Medan City, North Sumatra, Indonesia.

The study spanned a period of five months, commencing in April and concluding in September 2024. Data collection activities, which included observation, interviews, and documentation, were carried out in several stages throughout this period until the completion of the research.

2.3. Data Sources

Data are recorded facts and information, whether in the form of words, numbers, or symbols, gathered through measurement or observation for specific research purposes.

The data sources utilized in this study are categorized as Primary and Secondary:

- Primary Data Sources**, is information collected directly by the researcher from the original source. For this study, the primary sources include: Person: Direct in-depth interviews were conducted with key individuals, including: The Owner of Gudang Wale, Senior Management, Three Digital Marketing Team members, and Three regular large-scale consumers (wholesale customers). Paper: Relevant internal documents, records, and reports. Place: Direct observation of the research location (Gudang Wale) to understand the context and situation related to the digital marketing activities.
- Secondary Data Sources**, is information obtained indirectly, having been collected previously by other parties for commercial or non-commercial purposes.

This data was gathered through documentation and observation of existing available information, such as books, reports, journals, and other relevant literature, to support the primary findings.

2.4. Research Subjects

The subjects of this study are individuals directly involved in Gudang Wale's digital marketing activities, focusing on those responsible for the planning, implementation, and reception of the digital marketing strategy.

The research subjects provide both internal and external perspectives on the effectiveness of using Facebook Marketplace to increase onion sales.

- Owner/Stakeholder**: As the primary strategic decision-maker, the owner determines policies regarding digital marketing and the use of platforms like Facebook Marketplace.
- Senior Management**: Responsible for operational planning, inventory management, team supervision, and supply chain logistics, ensuring the optimal flow that supports marketing efforts.
- Digital Marketing Team (IT, Marketing, and Operations)**: This team is crucial for implementing digital strategies, managing social media and marketplace activities, optimizing campaigns, and handling customer communication.
- Consumers**: Specifically, customers who purchase Gudang Wale's onion products via Facebook Marketplace. They provide the external perspective on digital marketing effectiveness and the overall shopping experience.

Table 1. Research Subjects

No.	Name	Gender	Position	Informant Code
1.	Ibu Ratna Juwita	Female	Owner/Stakeholder	Informant 1
2.	Bapak Syakirin Pangaribuan	Male	Senior Management	Informant 2

No.	Name	Gender	Position	Informant Code
3.	Bapak Rivandi Pratama	Male	Digital Marketing Staff	Informant 3
4.	Bapak Kevin	Male	IT Staff	Informant 4
5.	Bapak Fredy	Male	Operational Staff	Informant 5
6.	Bapak Jonathan	Male	Consumer	Informant 6
7.	Bapak Nasib	Male	Consumer	Informant 7
8.	Bapak Firzha	Male	Consumer	Informant 8

2.5. Data Collection Techniques

To ensure the reliability and accuracy of the findings (Auladina, 2022), this study employed the following triangulation of data collection techniques:

- a. **Observation.** Direct observation was utilized to understand the actual practice of digital marketing at Gudang Wale. The key aspects observed were: Social Media Usage: Monitoring how Gudang Wale utilizes social media, specifically Facebook Marketplace, for onion sales, including content creation, posting frequency, and interaction with customers. Facebook Ad Management: Observing the marketing team's strategy in managing advertisements (including features like boosted posts and targeted ads), ad design, target audience selection, and overall advertising effectiveness. Customer Interaction: Tracking the company's responsiveness to customer inquiries, complaints, and feedback received via Facebook Marketplace to assess service quality and active engagement.
- b. **In-Depth Interviews** were the primary technique for gathering rich qualitative data on the digital marketing strategy. Key actors interviewed included: Owner: To explore strategic decision-making regarding digital marketing implementation and the goals/challenges of using Facebook as a marketplace. Senior Management: To understand operational decision-making, identify challenges, evaluate leadership, and assess initiatives for improving company performance. Digital Marketing Team: To gather technical and operational details on campaign planning, execution, promotional techniques, and effective utilization of Facebook Marketplace features. Consumers: To gain an external perspective on the platform's effectiveness, ease of transaction, and satisfaction levels regarding the onion products offered.
- c. **Documentation** was used as a supplementary method to gather and analyze various existing documents (internal reports, records, etc.) that provide supporting information and further reinforce the findings obtained from the interviews and observations.

2.6. Data Validity

To enhance the trustworthiness and ensure the demonstrable validity of the research findings, this study implemented several quality criteria, following the four criteria for qualitative research validity (Susanto & Jailani, 2023):

- a. **Credibility (Trustworthiness).** Credibility aims to ensure the collected data aligns with reality. Techniques used to achieve this include Triangulation (using multiple data sources for comparison and verification), member checking, extended field engagement, and peer debriefing.
- b. **Dependability (Reliability).** This criterion focuses on avoiding errors in data collection and interpretation to ensure scientific accountability. Dependability addresses potential biases or limitations stemming from the researcher's experience or knowledge.
- c. **Confirmability (Objectivity).** Confirmability evaluates the research results by verifying that the interpretations and findings are directly supported by relevant evidence and source materials gathered during the study.
- d. **Triangulation.** Triangulation is a core technique used to verify data validity by comparing findings across different sources or methods. This research primarily uses methodological triangulation, employing multiple data collection techniques (e.g., observation, interviews, and documentation) and verifying findings from various informants (Owner, Senior Management, Marketing Team, and Consumers).

2.7. Data Analysis

The analytical approach used in this research is qualitative analysis. Data analysis is an ongoing and iterative process that occurs both during and after data collection until data saturation is reached. During interviews, the researcher immediately analyzes responses, continuing the questioning until valid data is obtained.

The qualitative data analysis process involves three main interactive stages:

- Data Reduction.** This involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data that has been gathered. Data reduction is the process of filtering, grouping, and organizing the information to provide a clearer overview of the findings and make the data more accessible for subsequent steps.
- Data Display.** Data display is the organized assembly of information to facilitate conclusion drawing and action-taking. The researcher groups the data systematically to allow for an understanding of the interactions between different parts within the overall context. Displaying the data simplifies situation comprehension and aids in planning future steps.
- Conclusion Drawing/Verification.** In this final stage, the researcher formulates and expresses new findings from the research. This involves repeatedly reviewing the existing data and making continuous verifications to ensure the conclusions drawn are robust and well-supported by the evidence.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Overview of Gudang Wale

Gudang Wale, located at Jl. Bunga Teratai VII No. 7, Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, is a company specializing in the production and distribution of high-quality onions. Since its founding, the company has established a strong local reputation built on commitment to superior product quality, professional service, and operational efficiency.

The company's journey began with a strong vision: to become a leading high-quality onion provider and contribute positively to the local agricultural sector. Gudang Wale achieved this by cooperating with local farmers, expanding production capacity, and integrating modern technology to ensure consistency. The company maintains a long-term focus on sustainability, innovation, strengthening its brand, and leveraging digital platforms to remain competitive and promote local economic growth.

3.2. Vision, Mission, and Organizational Structure

Vision: To become a leading onion provider focused on enhancing customer service and optimizing digital marketing to consistently meet market demand. **Mission:** i) To deliver high-quality onions complemented by excellent customer service. ii) To develop and implement the best technological solutions to expand market reach. iii) To provide a user-friendly and secure e-commerce platform.

3.3. Organizational Structure

Gudang Wale's organizational structure is composed of several key divisions designed to support the development and implementation of its e-commerce strategy, specifically utilizing Facebook Marketplace.

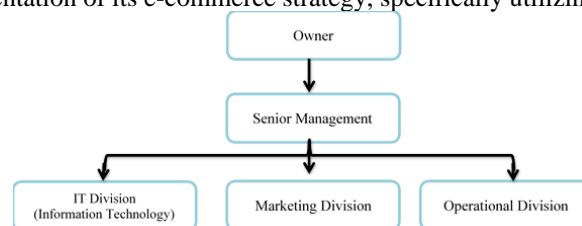


Figure 1. Organizational structure of Wale Warehouse

3.4. Data Analysis and Validity

Data Validity, the validity of the data was assessed using methodological triangulation, which involves cross-verifying research findings through multiple data collection techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. This approach ensures the trustworthiness and validity of the results obtained from all sources.

Table 2. Triangulation Method

Research Question	Key Interview Findings	Key Observation Findings	Core Identified Pattern
Digital Marketing Strategy	Management struggles to utilize advanced Facebook features (store settings, structured promotion, chatbot automation) and faces difficulty responding to customers quickly.	High reliance on costly, unmeasurable traditional marketing; suboptimal use of Facebook features due to limited knowledge.	Low Facebook Sales due to low content quality, limited technology knowledge, intense competition, and minimal supervision.
Facebook Marketplace Influence on Consumer Behavior	Consumers report difficulty finding Gudang Wale's products among competitors. Sales strategy focuses on discounts rather than innovation.	Marketplace use does not fully meet consumer expectations for personalized interaction.	Suboptimal Consumer Engagement due to inadequate interaction, product discoverability issues, and intense competition.
Barriers to Digital Optimization	Simple IT infrastructure, slow internet speed, and lack of automatic sales management software are major constraints. Product visuals and descriptions need improvement.	Barriers in technological knowledge and difficulty measuring traditional campaign results confirm the urgent need for a shift.	Low Effectiveness caused by limited technological knowledge, difficulty measuring ROI, inadequate IT infrastructure, and unappealing product display.

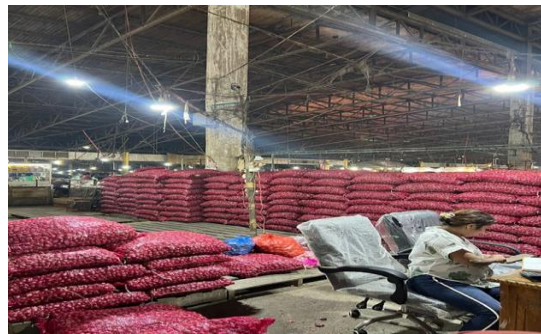


Figure 2. Conditions and activities at Wale Warehouse

3.5. Research Findings

Observation revealed that Gudang Wale still heavily relies on traditional marketing, which is associated with high costs and low, hard-to-measure effectiveness, significantly limiting market reach (especially online consumers).

Although Facebook Marketplace is being used, its utilization is suboptimal due to staff limitations in platform knowledge, resulting in unattractive product content. The findings emphasize that an immediate shift from expensive traditional methods to a measurable digital marketing strategy is necessary. Effective optimization of Facebook Marketplace—through engaging content, structured promotions, and maximized interactive features—holds the significant potential to expand market reach and substantially increase onion sales by aligning with evolving consumer behavior.

Informant Profile, the research involved eight (8) key informants selected through purposive sampling, representing both internal operations and external consumer perspectives:

Table 3. Informants interviewed

Category	Informant Role	Key Contribution
Internal (5)	Owner (Ibu Ratna Juwita)	Strategic decision-making, particularly the shift to digital marketing.
	Senior Management (Bapak Syakirin)	Operational oversight and ensuring team alignment with digital strategy goals.
	Digital Marketing Staff (Bapak Rivandi)	Campaign implementation, content creation, and analyzing digital performance.
	IT Staff (Bapak Kevin)	Managing technical infrastructure and system integration for the digital platform.
	Operational Staff (Bapak Fredy)	Handling product distribution, order fulfillment, and logistics.
External (3)	Consumers (Bapak Jonathan, Bapak Nasib, Bapak Firzha)	Providing insight into online shopping experience, product satisfaction, and platform usability.

3.6. Interview Results

In-depth, flexible, and unstructured interviews were conducted to gather detailed information based on key variable indicators. The main findings are summarized below:

a. Digital Marketing Challenges

Accessibility and Interactivity: Management (Bapak Syakirin, Bapak Rivandi) admitted to suboptimal platform utilization due to limited knowledge, resulting in difficulties in quickly responding to customers (relying on manual replies) and failure to use essential features like store setup or chatbot automation.

Entertainment and Informativeness: Content (photos/descriptions) is standard and less attractive (Bapak Fredy, Bapak Rivandi). Product information lacks detail (e.g., source, organic status), reducing consumer confidence.

Credibility and Irritation: Credibility is maintained through transparency (Owner), but is limited by a low number of customer reviews. Consumers report being irritated by external ads and notifications (Bapak Fredy).

b. Facebook Marketplace Operational Issues

Discovery and Competition: Consumers (Bapak Jonathan) frequently use the platform but find Gudang Wale's products difficult to locate due to intense competition; better visuals are needed. Gudang Wale currently competes using discounts and speed, but requires innovation (Bapak Rivandi).

Infrastructure and Back-end: The IT infrastructure is simple, suffering from slow internet and a lack of automated sales management software (Bapak Kevin). Both sales data and customer interaction are currently managed manually, causing operational delays (Bapak Fredy).

Strategy: Gudang Wale is currently focused on physical products but is considering adding digital value-added content and is open to using intermediaries (influencers) to boost visibility (Owner, Bapak Syakirin).

c. Sales Improvement Factors (Strengths):

Price and Promotion: Pricing is competitive and combined with effective digital promotions (discounts, bundling, giveaways) to generate urgency and drive instant sales (Bapak Nasib, Bapak Rivandi).

Quality and Product: Product quality is consistently very good (fresh, large size, low spoilage), creating strong consumer loyalty (Bapak Firzha). Inventory is managed using a real-time system to ensure constant stock availability and supports product diversification (Bapak Kevin).

3.7. Discussion

Digital Marketing Strategy Optimization on Facebook Marketplace

Based on the analysis, Gudang Wale's digital marketing strategy on Facebook Marketplace is suboptimal, resulting in low onion sales. The primary contributing factors are:

Underutilization of Facebook Features: Key platform features (store setup, structured promotions) are not fully leveraged due to management's limited knowledge, hindering product accessibility. **Slow Response and Lack of Automation:** The company struggles with slow manual customer response times and fails to utilize automation tools (like chatbots), negatively affecting customer experience and conversion. **Low-Quality Marketing Content:** Posted content is often basic (standard photos/descriptions) and lacks the creativity or visual appeal needed to stand out amidst high competition. **Inadequate Technology Infrastructure:** The simple IT infrastructure, coupled with the lack of automated sales management software and analysis tools, severely limits operational efficiency and the ability to measure campaign results. **Minimal Digital Supervision:** Insufficient oversight on digital activities hinders effective strategy evaluation and correction.

Conclusion: To boost sales, Gudang Wale must maximize platform features, adopt automation for quick responses, increase content quality and creativity, and improve supervision of digital performance.

Influence of Facebook Marketplace Usage on Consumer Buying Behavior

Gudang Wale's use of Facebook Marketplace significantly affects consumer behavior, but its effectiveness is limited by:

Inadequate Personalized Interaction: Consumers expect more personal and responsive communication than the current standard/automated responses provided by the company. **Product Discoverability Issues:** High platform competition makes it difficult for consumers to easily find Gudang Wale's products, leading them to switch to more visible sellers. **Unmet Expectations:** The company's inability to provide an efficient, highly responsive, and personal buying experience leads consumers to seek out more satisfactory alternatives.

Conclusion: Gudang Wale needs to improve the quality of interaction, optimize product visibility, and create a more responsive and personal purchasing experience to positively influence consumer behavior.

Barriers to Digital Optimization Affecting Marketplace Effectiveness

Several optimization barriers directly reduce the effectiveness of Facebook Marketplace in driving sales:

Limited Technological Knowledge: Staff lacks adequate knowledge of platform features and comprehensive digital marketing strategies. **Difficulty Measuring Campaign Results:** The continued reliance on unmeasurable traditional marketing and the failure to utilize platform analytics make it difficult to evaluate digital strategy effectiveness. **Inadequate IT Infrastructure:** Low internet speed and the lack of sophisticated IT systems restrict the company's ability to respond quickly and utilize advanced marketplace features. **Unattractive Product Display:** Suboptimal visual content and unclear product descriptions reduce consumer attraction in a highly competitive digital environment.

Conclusion: Overcoming these barriers requires investment in better IT infrastructure, upskilling the digital team's capabilities, and significantly improving the visual and informational quality of product displays.

4. CONCLUSION

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the optimization of Gudang Wale's digital marketing strategy via Facebook Marketplace.

Methodology Highlights: Data was collected from eight (8) key informants (Owner, Senior Management, relevant staff, and three regular consumers) selected through purposive sampling. The findings were validated using methodological triangulation (in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation) to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Core Findings:

Digital Strategy Effectiveness: Gudang Wale's digital marketing strategy is currently suboptimal. Although the team uses Facebook Marketplace features, limited technical knowledge restricts optimal utilization, resulting in low consumer appeal and poor conversion rates.

Consumer Influence: The platform influences consumer purchasing behavior, but consumers report difficulty finding Gudang Wale's products amidst high competition, indicating a need to strengthen product visibility and positioning.

Optimization Barriers: The overall effectiveness of Facebook Marketplace is significantly hampered by structural and knowledge barriers, including limited technological knowledge, inadequate IT infrastructure, unattractive product displays, and the inability to accurately measure digital campaign results.

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