

# Communication Resilience in Enhancing Branding of SME Products: Implementation of Information Technology as a Strategic Innovation

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## ABSTRACT

SMEs play a vital role in the global economy, particularly in creating employment opportunities. SMEs often face challenges in building and strengthening their brand image. Limited resources and accessibility to a wider market are major obstacles. This research aims to examine communication resilience and the implementation of information technology in enhancing branding of SME products. This research method utilizes a qualitative approach with a focus on literature review and descriptive analysis. Data used are gathered from scholarly articles published between 2006 and 2024 through Google Scholar. The study results indicate that communication resilience is a crucial factor for SMEs in addressing challenges and changes in the business environment. The implementation of information technology as a strategic innovation plays a crucial role in strengthening this communication resilience. By leveraging digital platforms and social media, SMEs can enhance product visibility, engage with customers, and expand the market without substantial costs.

**Keywords:** Communication Resilience, Branding, SME Products, Information Technology, Strategic Innovation

## INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in the global economy, particularly in creating significant employment opportunities and making substantial contributions to economic growth at both local and regional levels (Ausat et al., 2022). As vital economic pillars, MSMEs have the potential to drive economic activity by providing opportunities for individuals to participate in economic endeavors (Ausat & Peirisal, 2021). When actively engaged across various economic sectors, MSMEs can not only offer employment to local communities but also aid in boosting purchasing power and consumption in domestic markets. They serve not only as primary stabilizers in creating economic stability but also form a solid foundation for sustainable economic development (Sutrisno, Ausat, Permana, & Santosa, 2023).

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) consistently face a range of complex challenges in their efforts to strengthen and build their brand image. The main constraints often encountered are limited resources and restricted accessibility to broader markets (Ausat & Suherlan, 2021). These limitations frequently hinder MSMEs' ability to develop a strong brand identity and expand their market reach (Chatterjee et al., 2021). Additionally, intense competition in dynamic business environments adds complexity to the challenges faced by MSMEs in establishing enduring and evolving brand images in competitive markets (Farida & Setiawan, 2022).

In confronting various unforeseen challenges, such as rapid market trend shifts, impacts of natural disasters, or economic crisis shocks, communication resilience becomes an inevitable and crucial aspect for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The ability to adapt quickly and effectively in conveying messages, responding to changes, and building strong stakeholder relationships is key to sustaining the success of MSMEs amidst uncertain market dynamics (Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023). Communication resilience is not only a survival tool but also a foundation enabling MSMEs to turn challenges into opportunities, strengthen their market position, and drive sustainable long-term growth (Alberti et al., 2018).

Information technology has played a significant role in developing communication resilience for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Through the adoption of digital platforms, leveraging social media, and utilizing e-commerce applications, MSMEs have broader and more affordable access to previously inaccessible markets (Abed et al., 2015). The presence of this technology enables MSMEs to expand their geographical reach without incurring prohibitive costs they might not be able to afford. Digital platforms provide an ideal space for MSMEs to promote their products and services, interact directly with customers, and efficiently enhance brand awareness (Risdiyanto et al., 2023). In this context, the integration of information technology becomes an inevitable strategy for MSMEs seeking to optimize their communication resilience, strengthen their market position, and effectively address complex challenges.

The implementation of information technology not only expands market accessibility for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) but also significantly impacts their brand image. Through the proper utilization of branding strategies via digital media, MSMEs have the opportunity to reinforce their brand identity and enhance consumer trust (Haudi et al., 2022). The use of information technology in the branding context provides MSMEs with the opportunity to effectively convey their brand message to a wider audience through various digital platforms (Aviva et al., 2023). This enables them to create consistent and compelling brand narratives, which in turn can shape positive perceptions among consumers. Moreover, the integration of information technology in branding strategies also provides MSMEs with the opportunity to interact directly with consumers, gather valuable feedback, and build closer relationships with their market segments (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

On the other hand, research on the role of information technology in the development of MSMEs has been conducted. (Subagja et al., 2023) evaluates the influence of ChatGPT usage in enhancing customer service quality in MSMEs. The research findings conclude that the use of ChatGPT can assist MSMEs in improving customer service quality and operational efficiency. MSMEs need to consider several important aspects in using this technology, such as customer context and situation, staff training, customer data privacy and security, and challenges in technology usage. In the long run, the use of ChatGPT can help MSMEs gain better insights into customer preferences and enhance customer satisfaction. (Sudirjo et al., 2023) examines the potential of ChatGPT in improving communication efficiency for MSMEs. The study concludes that the utilization of artificial intelligence technology such as ChatGPT can provide significant benefits to MSMEs in enhancing communication efficiency and overall business management. In the increasingly digital era, the use of artificial intelligence technology can be a competitive advantage for MSMEs in expanding their businesses.

Although there are some studies on the role of information technology in the development of MSMEs, there are still few that specifically focus on communication resilience and its influence on MSME product branding. Therefore, research on communication resilience and the implementation of information technology in enhancing MSME product branding becomes increasingly relevant to explore and further investigate on this occasion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Communication Resilience

Communication resilience refers to the ability of an entity, such as an individual, organization, or community, to adapt and endure in facing communication challenges or crises (Williams et al., 2017). It encompasses the capacity to recover, adjust, and maintain effective communication processes in changing or difficult situations, such as natural disasters, social crises,

or market changes. Communication resilience involves proactive, flexible, and responsive communication strategies, considering factors like speed, accuracy, and openness in conveying information to various stakeholders. With strong communication resilience, entities can mitigate the negative impacts of communication disruptions and maintain good relationships with stakeholders, thereby strengthening their brand foundation and reputation (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

### **Branding**

Branding refers to the strategic process of building and managing the image and identity of a product, service, or organization in consumers' minds (Sammuto-Bonnici, 2015). It involves creating consistent visual, narrative, and experiential elements to communicate the values, messages, and uniqueness that differentiate the brand from its competitors. The primary goal of branding is to influence consumer perceptions and preferences, build trust, loyalty, and emotional connections with the brand, and create sustainable long-term added value (Loureiro et al., 2012). With effective branding strategies, a brand can achieve strong differentiation in the market, enhance its attractiveness, and gain significant competitive advantages.

### **SME Products**

SME products refer to goods or services produced or provided by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These products are often locally made with smaller production scales compared to larger companies. SME products can encompass various categories, ranging from food and beverages, handicrafts, clothing, to services such as consultancy, repair services, or beauty services (Bunga Aditi et al., 2023). The uniqueness of SME products lies in their often unique, diverse characteristics that reflect local culture or traditional skills, as well as their significant contribution to the local economy and community welfare (Rawindaran et al., 2023).

### **Information Technology**

Information technology refers to the use of various computer tools, systems, and infrastructure to collect, store, process, and disseminate information efficiently and effectively (Diawati et al., 2023; Touriano et al., 2023). This includes hardware such as computers, servers, and networking devices, as well as software such as applications, database management systems, and digital platforms (Kamar et al., 2022). Information technology plays a crucial role in digital transformation, enabling organizations and individuals to automate business processes, enhance communication and collaboration, optimize data management, and develop innovative solutions to meet evolving needs in the digital era (Harahap et al., 2023; Sutrisno, Kuraesin, et al., 2023). By effectively leveraging information technology, organizations can enhance productivity, expand market reach, and create significant added value across various industry sectors (Sutrisno, Ausat, Permana, & Harahap, 2023).

### **Strategic Innovation**

Strategic innovation refers to planned and directed efforts to create fundamental changes in the structure, processes, or business models of an organization with the aim of achieving long-term competitive advantage (Dogan, 2017). It involves identifying new opportunities, developing creative ideas, and implementing solutions different from those previously existing to change paradigms or expand market boundaries. Strategic innovation not only focuses on developing new products or services but also on optimizing internal processes, entering new markets, or forming strategic partnerships that can strengthen the organization's position in the market (Kodama, 2017). By implementing strategic innovation, organizations can create sustainable added value, anticipate market changes, and achieve sustainable advantages in dynamic business environments.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research method utilizes a qualitative approach with a focus on literature review and descriptive analysis. Data used are gathered from scholarly articles published between 2006 and 2024 through Google Scholar. The initial stage of the research involves collecting 58 relevant

articles, but after a rigorous selection process, 43 high-quality and relevant articles are chosen for analysis. The analysis is conducted by exploring and synthesizing the main findings from these articles, then identifying patterns, trends, and differences in concepts, theories, or approaches found. Thus, this method enables obtaining in-depth insights into the research topic, namely communication resilience in enhancing branding of SME products with the implementation of information technology as a strategic innovation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Communication resilience, as a vital capability in organizational and SME contexts, demonstrates a business entity's capacity to sustain and improve communication channels to maintain effective and efficient operational continuity amidst ever-changing business environment challenges and dynamics. In the strategic context of enhancing the brand image of SME products, communication resilience showcases its crucial relevance. This is due to the resource constraints often inherent in SMEs, particularly in the realm of product promotion and marketing, which can be facilitated by the robust and measured application of communication resilience.

The implementation of information technology as a strategic innovation has become one of the primary approaches to strengthening communication resilience in SMEs. By leveraging available digital platforms and social media, SMEs have the opportunity to significantly enhance the visibility of their products in an increasingly digitally connected market (Andika et al., 2021). Furthermore, through direct interaction with customers via various digital communication channels, SMEs can gain valuable insights into customer preferences and receive real-time feedback, enabling them to tailor their marketing strategies and products more precisely (Mutfar et al., 2023). Additionally, the ability to expand market reach without incurring significant costs is a significant advantage of leveraging information technology in the context of SME communication resilience.

The success of information technology implementation in enhancing SME communication resilience largely depends on several crucial factors that need to be considered. Firstly, it is important for SMEs to have adequate access to the information technology used, coupled with a deep understanding of how to optimally leverage it. Comprehensive technical skills and knowledge will form a solid foundation to ensure the successful integration of information technology into SME communication strategies (Loo et al., 2023). Furthermore, quality training and mentoring in this regard are key elements that cannot be overlooked. By providing SMEs with facilities to develop their information technology competencies, both individually and organizationally, training can help reduce the understanding and skill gaps that often hinder effective information technology adoption (Ghobakhloo et al., 2012). Thus, investing in information technology capacity development at the SME level can be a crucial strategic step in strengthening their communication resilience.

Moreover, it is important for SMEs to implement the right communication strategies utilizing information technology. This approach encompasses various aspects, including creating engaging and relevant content for target audiences, responsive and sustainable interaction with customers across various digital platforms, and careful and proactive online reputation management. Engaging and relevant content plays a crucial role in attracting and maintaining the interest of potential customers, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of SME communication in capturing markets (Sherly et al., 2020). Additionally, responsive interaction with customers strengthens engagement and trust, creating deeper and more sustainable relationships. Effective online reputation management is essential in this digital era, where public perception of brands is often shaped by online activities (Stenger, 2014). Implementing a holistic communication strategy through information technology will be a crucial step for SMEs in strengthening their position in the competitive market.

Furthermore, communication resilience in the context of SMEs also involves the ability to quickly respond to changes and crisis situations that may arise (Angeles, 2024). In this regard, the implementation of information technology becomes increasingly important. SMEs need to be equipped with sophisticated monitoring systems and effective crisis management mechanisms to

anticipate and address challenges that may arise, such as responding to customer complaints or facing cyber attacks that could threaten operational continuity and business reputation. Through the appropriate adoption of information technology, SMEs can strengthen their resilience to various threats and maintain effective communication in pressure-filled and dynamic situations (Chan et al., 2023).

With the increased communication resilience through the implementation of information technology, SMEs have significant opportunities to strengthen their brand identity and product image in the market. By using information technology as a foundation for their communication strategies, SMEs can shape the perception that they are not only innovative but also responsive to customer needs and capable of addressing diverse business challenges. By building a reputation as reliable and adaptive business entities, SMEs can win the trust of critical customers and appeal to a broader market segment. Overall, improvements in this communication resilience not only aid in expanding market share but also are key to guiding SMEs towards sustainable growth and long-term sustainability in an increasingly competitive business landscape.

In addition to the previously outlined benefits, the implementation of information technology also provides SMEs with opportunities to gather comprehensive data and analyze customer behavior more deeply. By leveraging the data analysis capabilities enabled by information technology, SMEs can gain a deeper understanding of their customers' preferences, trends, and needs (Bhardwaj, 2022). This careful data analysis provides valuable insights that enable SMEs to design more focused marketing strategies and develop products that are more aligned with market needs (Tarigan & Mawardi, 2024). Thus, SMEs can optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of every step in their business processes, strengthening their competitive position in an increasingly dynamic and changing market.

Moreover, communication resilience built through the implementation of information technology not only serves as a tool to maintain smooth communication but also can become a strategic weapon for SMEs in facing increasingly fierce competition in the market. By building strong and interactive communication channels with customers through information technology, SMEs have the opportunity to not only maintain but also enhance customer loyalty (Achmad, 2023). In a business landscape filled with larger competitors, the ability to build close and personal relationships with customers can be a significant competitive advantage for SMEs. Through effective and continuous communication, SMEs can create positive customer experiences and strengthen emotional bonds with their brands, making customers more likely to choose their products or services over competitors who do not have the same level of connection (Brakus et al., 2009). Therefore, communication resilience through information technology not only provides SMEs with an advantage in addressing various business challenges but also strengthens their position in a competitive market.

Furthermore, the presence of information technology provides SMEs with the ability to communicate effectively and responsively, allowing them to better respond to market changes and industry trends. The ability to adapt quickly to market dynamics is a key element of successful business resilience (Pertheban et al., 2023). With sophisticated communication tools, SMEs can gain real-time insights into changes in customer preferences, evolving competition, and significant industry events (Omol, 2023). Thus, they can take necessary actions to adjust their marketing and operational strategies precisely and proactively, reducing risks and increasing opportunities in facing diverse business challenges. The ability to respond quickly to market dynamics through information technology creates a solid foundation for building sustainable business resilience for SMEs amidst increasingly fierce competition.

In the long run, communication resilience strengthened by information technology not only becomes a vital instrument for SMEs in responding to future challenges but also serves as the foundation for their growth and sustainability amidst complex business dynamics. With the ability to adapt quickly to rapid market changes and increasingly fierce global competition, SMEs can strengthen their position as resilient and relevant players in a constantly changing market. Additionally, this communication resilience opens doors for SMEs to endure uncertain economic conditions, giving them an advantage in maintaining operational and financial stability. By

providing a sustainable contribution to economic growth, both at the local and national levels, SMEs demonstrate their crucial role in strengthening the foundation of inclusive and sustainable economic development, creating opportunities for sustainable progress for society as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

Communication resilience is an important factor for MSMEs in facing challenges and changes in the business environment. The application of information technology as a strategic innovation plays a crucial role in strengthening this communication resilience. By utilising digital platforms and social media, MSMEs can increase product visibility, interact with customers, and expand markets without huge costs. However, the successful application of information technology depends on access, understanding, and appropriate communication strategies. Rapid response to changes and crises is also necessary, with effective monitoring and crisis management systems in place. Through communication resilience strengthened by information technology, MSMEs can strengthen product branding, collect and analyse customer data, face competition, and better respond to market changes and industry trends. Suggestions that can be given on the results of this study include:

1. MSMEs need to invest time and resources in training and mentoring to improve understanding and access to information technology.
2. It is important to develop appropriate communication strategies through information technology, including engaging content, responsive interaction with customers, and online reputation management.
3. MSMEs should have effective monitoring and crisis management systems in place to respond quickly to changes and crises that may arise.
4. Use data analysis to better understand customer behaviour and adapt marketing and product development strategies accordingly.
5. Focus on developing the ability to communicate effectively and quickly through information technology to better respond to market changes and industry trends in the long term.

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