

Post-acquisition TikTok and Tokopedia: Optimization marketing media to encourage entrepreneurship on Sumatra Island

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the potential of TikTok as a digital marketing platform for fostering entrepreneurship on Sumatra Island, Indonesia. The study addresses the gap in the current literature regarding the suboptimal use of digital marketing tools in the region, particularly TikTok, which remains under-utilized despite its potential to enhance entrepreneurial growth. Using a qualitative research approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews with six informants, three TikTok sellers and three affiliates from Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra. Findings indicate that TikTok serves as an effective and cost-efficient platform for entrepreneurs, offering a dual function as both an entertainment and shopping medium. However, the study reveals challenges, such as limited digital financial literacy and an underdeveloped application of marketing strategies on the island. The research contributes to understanding the dynamics of digital marketing adoption in Sumatra, highlighting the necessity of enhancing digital financial literacy and maximizing the use of the platform, for example, TikTok to boost entrepreneurial independence. The implications of this study suggest the importance of integrating digital tools in regional economic policies to foster inclusive growth. The study also acknowledges limitations such as the small sample size and the focused geographical scope which recommend future research with broader, more diverse samples and a mixed-methods approach to explore long-term business sustainability and the comparative effectiveness of various digital platforms.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Digital Marketing, Shopping Medium, Business Sustainability.



1. INTRODUCTION

In achieving social change towards the Industrial 5.0 era which combines humans and machines working together to achieve economic efficiency, adequate quantity and quality of entrepreneurs is needed. Sumatra Island as the second most significant economic growth in Indonesia has the potential to shift the ranking of Java island in the future (Rahman et al., 2023). This potential is further supported by West Sumatra Province, which has successfully increased the number of entrepreneurs by 40,000 since 2021, and projections suggest this number will rise to 100,000 by 2026 (Antara Sumbar, 2023). Should other provinces on Sumatra Island follow suit, the island could become a frontrunner in regional economic growth in Indonesia (Syahza et al., 2020).

Population growth and unemployment rates are determining factors for economic growth on the islands of Sumatra and Java (Alrakhman et al., 2022). Population growth, which is closely related to the demographic bonus, whose peak is estimated in 2035, can be both an opportunity and a threat (Warsito, 2019). Likewise with concerns about the issue of unemployment on the island of Sumatra. Adriani & Yustini (2021) underscore that entrepreneurs are central to leveraging this demographic advantage, as they create business opportunities, employment, and foster economic independence for the productive age population (15-64 years). These dynamics highlight the critical role of entrepreneurship in securing long-term economic prosperity.

The increasing penetration of social media across generations has transformed it from a mere source of entertainment and communication into a powerful marketing tool. Social media now serves as a platform for digital marketing, an essential component of modern entrepreneurial strategies. The rise of digital marketing has revolutionized business practices, empowering entrepreneurs to reach broader audiences more efficiently. Wibowo (2021) emphasized that digital marketing is integral in today's economy, while Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) highlighted the role of the 5Ds—digital devices, platforms, media, data, and technology—in facilitating marketing interactions.

TikTok, a social media platform owned by ByteDance, has become increasingly popular as a marketing strategy due to its rapidly expanding engagement reach. In the current digital era, TikTok offers a promising marketing tool with its low costs (Akbari et al., 2022). Compared to traditional marketing media, TikTok can reach areas that are typically limited by traditional marketing media through its algorithms, which are part of artificial intelligence. Tang (2019) in his research highlighted three advantages of TikTok as a marketing medium: its ability to adapt quickly, its large media capacity, and its strong influential reach.

The era of digitalization which presents online marketing platforms that are integrated with social media is the foundation for entrepreneurs to progress and be independent (Susanto et al., 2021). Not only that, Indonesian government through the Ministry of Trade has provided legality for TikTok to resume operations along with the acquisition of Tokopedia after previously being deactivated (Puwaningwulan et al., 2024).

This study aims to address the core challenge hindering economic growth on Sumatra Island, suboptimal digitalization in the economic sector. By focusing on optimizing marketing media to encourage entrepreneurship, the research will contribute practical solutions to this pressing issue. The expected benefits of this research for various stakeholders are: (1) To explore the role of TikTok and Tokopedia as digital marketing tools for entrepreneurship on Sumatra Island; (2) To assess the effectiveness of TikTok's marketing strategies in fostering entrepreneurship among local businesses; (3) To identify the challenges and opportunities for Sumatra Island entrepreneurs in utilizing digital marketing platforms like TikTok and Tokopedia; (4) To provide recommendations for enhancing digitalization in Sumatra's economy through the optimization of marketing media for entrepreneurship development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The attachment to the decision of Minister of Cooperatives and SMEs Republic of Indonesia Number 961/KEP/M/XI/1995 explains, (1) Entrepreneurs are people who have entrepreneurial spirit, attitudes, behaviour and abilities; (2) Entrepreneurship is the spirit, attitude, behaviour and ability of a person in handling business or activities that lead to efforts to find, create, and apply new ways of working, technology, and products by increasing efficiency in order to provide better services and/or obtain greater profits. Entrepreneurship, or the activity of starting and running a business, is an important element in the economic growth and development (Stoica et al., 2020). Entrepreneurs contribute to innovation, and they play an important role in dynamic competition (Alsafadi & Aljuhmani, 2024). DIW Berlin, Germany & Kritikos (2014) in their research found that innovation from entrepreneurs also drives an economic growth. Economic growth will continue to be encouraged if the formation of new MSMEs continues to be encouraged (Surya et al., 2021).

In encouraging sustainable entrepreneurial independence, the legality of TikTok after the acquisition of Tokopedia is a gateway to open opportunities for the community, especially on Sumatra Island, in building an entrepreneurial ecosystem (Negara & Soesilowati, 2021). Becoming an entrepreneur by utilizing TikTok apps as a marketing tool can not only be done by entrepreneurs who have selling products, but also for affiliates who do not have selling products.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach through a literature study method. Literature study involves collecting data by reviewing and analysing various theoretical frameworks and findings from previous research (M.A.R. Habib, 2022). The research design is organized into three stages: (1) preparing sources of relevant research literature, (2) designing interview questions for online sessions with selected informants via Zoom, and (3) processing both primary data from informants and secondary data from the literature review.

The sources in this research were cited from articles available on Google Scholar, Scopus, and WoS. The key terms used in building the foundation of this research include "TikTok marketing"; "Digital MSMEs"; "economic growth of Sumatra"; and "entrepreneurship strategies." In addition, the TikTok Help Center was used as another data source to provide insights into platform functionality and user engagement. To strengthen the analysis in this study, we also posed questions about optimal marketing strategies to three informants from Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra. We conducted interviews via Zoom application to obtain information from the informants, and the interview data was then processed using NVivo 14 to design illustrations of the informants' responses and the differences between them. To ensure the validity of the research findings, a triangulation approach was applied. This approach involves cross-checking and validating data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. By comparing the findings from the interviews with secondary data, this study enhances the credibility and reliability of the results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. TikTok: Effective and Efficient Marketing Media

This study originates from the phenomenon of TikTok as a social media platform increasingly utilized for digital marketing purposes. However, its utilization remains suboptimal across Sumatra Island, coupled with low levels of digital financial literacy, both of which are seen as contributing factors to the relatively limited number of entrepreneurs in the region. This research aims to build upon the limitations

of previous studies, which also serve as key references in this study. Several prior studies that support the research process are as follows:

1. [Mou \(2020\)](#), in a study entitled *Study on Social Media Marketing Campaign Strategy – TikTok and Instagram*, explained that social media, which was once merely a platform for online interaction, has now transformed into a marketing platform. The researcher also confirmed that TikTok is among the top social media platforms adopted by entrepreneurs to reach and engage with their target markets.
2. [Wirdiyanti et al. \(2023\)](#), in their research entitled *How does e-commerce adoption impact micro, small, and medium enterprises' performance and financial inclusion? Evidence from Indonesia*, found the following results: (1) E-commerce, as a marketing indicator, plays a significant role in MSME business performance; (2) Entrepreneurs must engage in business branding to generate recognition and satisfaction among online customers; and (3) E-commerce adoption, online business performance, and digital financial inclusion are positively correlated.
3. [Parartha et al. \(2022\)](#), in their study *Enhancing Economic Growth through the Development of Youth Entrepreneurship in Pemecutan Kaja Village*, concluded that if the potential of youth is deployed through entrepreneurial programs, it can contribute significantly to the local economic growth. These individuals can be empowered according to their potential. Online marketing media was identified as an appropriate promotional tool that also aligns with public health protocols.
4. [Wibowo \(2021\)](#), in their research *The Penetration of TikTok Social Media Application as a Digital Marketing Platform: A Case Study of Batam City*, concluded that TikTok has a significant impact as a digital marketing tool due to its advantages in reaching a wider audience. For entrepreneurs, TikTok can enhance sales performance, even among newly joined consumers on the platform.
5. [Mavlutova et al. \(2022\)](#), in their study entitled *Digital Transformation as a Driver of the Financial Sector's Sustainable Development: An Impact on Financial Inclusion and Operational Efficiency*, concluded that digital transformation benefits users of financial services, including entrepreneurs. Financial institutions must ensure the availability of financial services 24/7, even during pandemics, to reduce logistical costs for entrepreneurs.

Based on the preceding literature that underpins this research, it can be concluded that TikTok is an effective and efficient platform for entrepreneurs to utilize as a marketing tool in the digital era, enabling broader market outreach. Entrepreneurs in this digital age should also be supported by comprehensive digital financial services and equitable dissemination of digital financial literacy to foster economic growth through the empowerment of entrepreneurs and MSMEs.

4.2. The Potential of Using TikTok as a Marketing Media on the Island of Sumatra

Sumatra Island, with an area of 473,481 km² and a population of 59.77 million people, has an open unemployment rate of 5.33% in 2022. This means that 3.18 million people on the island of Sumatra are not working and are not trying to find work. In fact, based on a survey conducted by ([Databoks, 2022](#)), Kepulauan Riau Province was listed as the second province with the highest unemployment rate in Indonesia after West Java.

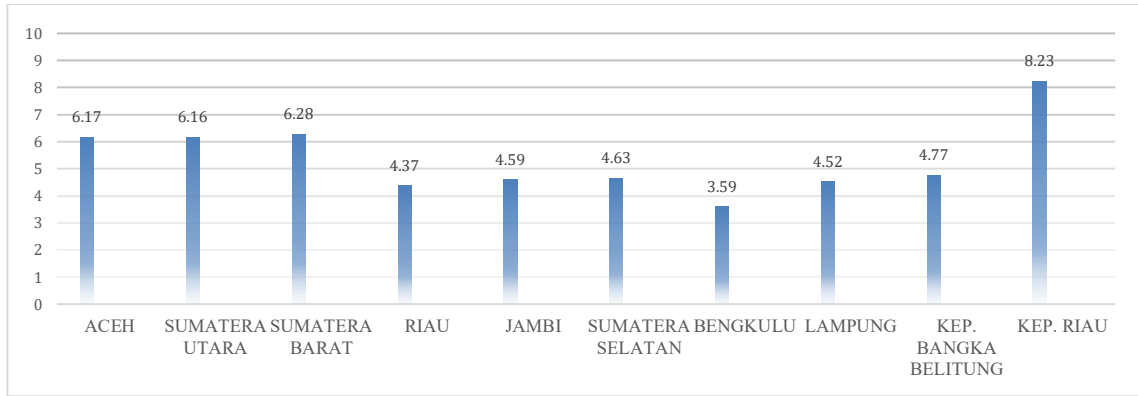


Figure 1. Sumatra Island Open Unemployment Rate in 2022 (in percent)

Source: Databoks (2022), processed

Figure 1 above shows that Kepulauan Riau is the province with the highest percentage of open unemployment rates on Sumatra Island. This percentage is even higher than the average open unemployment rate in Indonesia of 5.45%. Shavana et al. (2024) stated that the main factor causing the high percentage of open unemployment on Sumatra Island is because the government did not maximize the programs to support the quality improvement of human resources. The program to improve the quality of human resources can encourage the people of Sumatra Island to be more independent and productive in order to increase economic growth (Darwin Damanik, 2022). One indicator of economic growth through improving the quality of human resources is maximizing the number of MSMEs (Hernita et al., 2021). Figure 2 below is data on the number of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) on Sumatra Island:

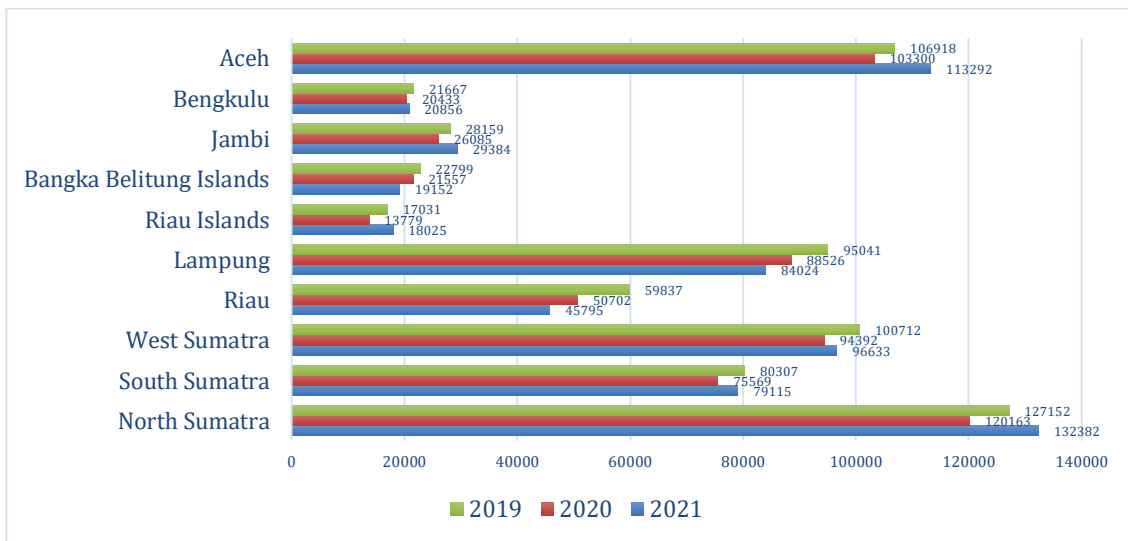


Figure 2. Number of MSMEs on Sumatra Island in 2019-2021

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (2022), processed

Based on Figure 2, every province on the Sumatra Island in 2020 showed a decrease in the number of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) compared to the previous year. The cause of the decline in the number of MSMEs is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, for the success of MSMEs, they started to recover and reorganize their MSMEs' strategy (Supari & Anton, 2022). However, based on the data above, in 2021, only a few provinces showed positive MSME growth compared to 2020, such as

Aceh, Bengkulu, Jambi, Kepulauan Riau, West Sumatra, South Sumatra, and North Sumatra. Meanwhile, Bangka Belitung, Lampung and Riau actually experienced a decline in the number of MSMEs.

4.3. Marketing Optimization Using TikTok for TikTok Seller

TikTok Shop offers a shopping and entertainment experience for users without having to use a separate e-commerce application. Populix (2022), in its survey showed that 86% of Indonesian people shop via social media platforms and 46% of them shop via TikTok social media. Populix (2022) also predicted that TikTok will become the most popular social media shopping centre in the future. TikTok through the TikTok Shop Academy provides complete guidance and guidelines for becoming a TikTok seller. With just 3 easy steps, TikTok users can play the dual role of user and seller. These steps are (1) Registering an Account; (2) Completing the profile data; and (3) Uploading the products.

TikTok has succeeded in shifting the popularity of Instagram and Facebook, both of which are part of Meta Platform Inc (Kraus et al., 2022). TikTok easily makes viral videos into trendsetters which also allows business promotional videos to be easily accessible to potential consumers. TikTok has been officially used in Indonesia since 2018 as a short video sharing application for the social media and entertainment segments (Puwaningwulan et al., 2024). Then in 2021 TikTok presented TikTok Shop which became a digital marketing platform. TikTok's dual role is an advantage that until now unrivalled by any social media. This advantage is utilized by sellers as a promising marketing medium. Figure 3 below shows the most frequently used online sales media:

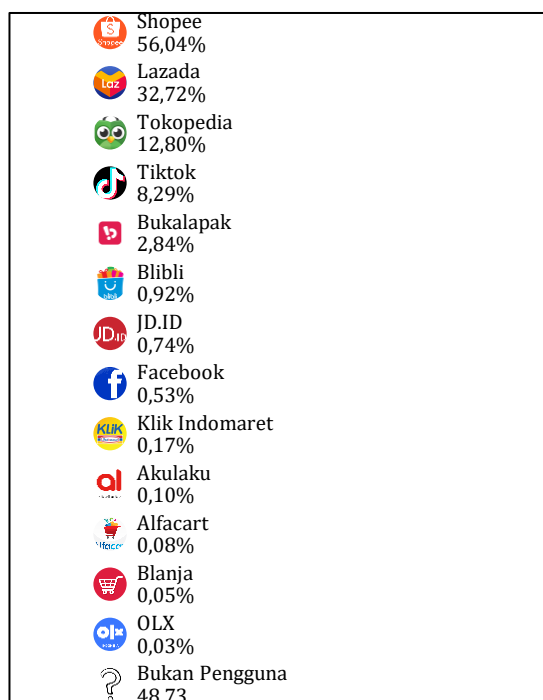


Figure 3. Most Frequently Used Online Sales Media

Source: Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (2023), processed

Based on Figure 3, there are only two social media that are popularly used for online sales, namely TikTok and Facebook. TikTok as social media provides a comprehensive and varied video viewing experience by empowering users to upload and watch content according to the user's wishes (Sharabati et al., 2022). The economic ecosystem supported by digitalization has shifted general habits of using social media not only as an online friendship network but also as a digital marketing medium (Bagale et al., 2023).

Based on information gathered from the official TikTok Shop website, optimizing the marketing of products sold at TikTok Shop can be done in several ways, namely: (1) Meeting buyers in real time via live broadcasts; (2) Marketing the products through short videos; (3) Fast order delivery services making it reaches customers shortly; (4) Collecting a seller badge through the Top Choice Seller program as a top seller badge and recommended by TikTok; and (5) Involving creators to increase sales. Meanwhile, based on information obtained from informants regarding marketing optimization using TikTok for TikTok Seller, the following results were obtained:

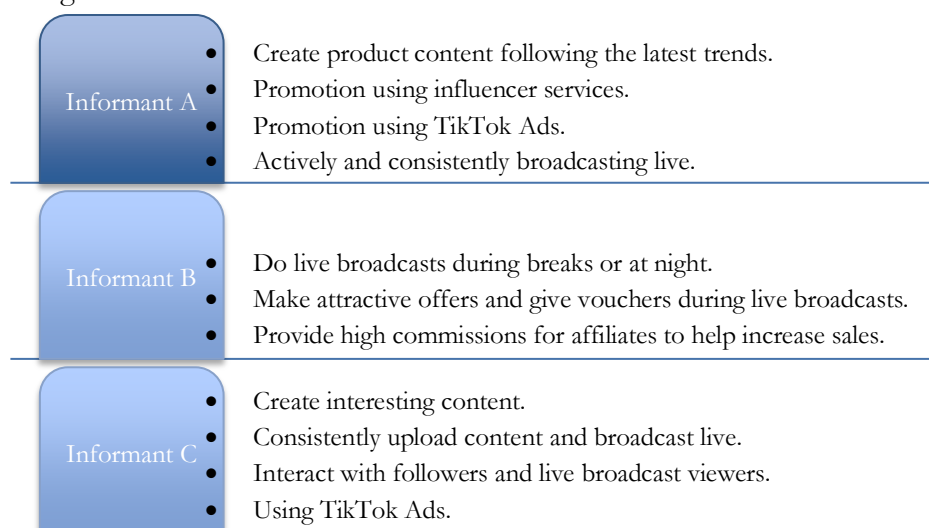


Figure 4. Marketing Optimization Using the TikTok Application for TikTok Seller

Source: Primary data, processed

Based on Figure 4, TikTok, through TikTok Shop, simultaneously and consistently continues to invite people to get involved in becoming sellers at TikTok Shop through effective persuasion methods (Atwell, 2023). Initially, users are asked to complete missions to get rewards in the form of money with a certain nominal value. Then, if users become more familiar with how TikTok works, TikTok will continue to encourage users to become sellers on the TikTok application. Optimizing the marketing strategy with TikTok, based on data collected from the official TikTok website and from informants as sellers on TikTok, demonstrates several similarities, likely a consistent and interactive live broadcast with potential buyers, involving creators to support sales, and actively participating in seller programs by TikTok.

4.4. Marketing Optimization Using TikTok for TikTok Affiliates

TikTok offers a friendly business ecosystem for anyone through advertising capabilities in the form of short videos or live broadcasts. TikTok's dual role as social media as well as marketing media put TikTok in the first rank of social media that is most effectively used as marketing media (Xiaoyi, 2023). TikTok not only encourages users to use TikTok as an entertainment medium but also provides opportunities for anyone to earn income through TikTok (Hasim & Sherlina, 2022). Apart from being a seller on TikTok, users can also use TikTok Affiliate as a medium for earning more income without having or being the firsthand producer of the products sold.

TikTok Affiliate has a different way of working from TikTok Seller even though the orientation of both is to gain profits by increasing sales through marketing on the TikTok application (Sibulan & Limos-Galay, 2024). Through commissions and inventiveness, TikTok affiliates can be used by creators to bring creators and retailers together (Pavlovic, 2023). Increasingly dynamic digitalization is becoming an era of independence and economic independence for anyone without having to have large capital. TikTok

Affiliate is the answer for the people of Sumatra Island who want to start a business without having to produce products to market (Sibulan & Limos-Galay, 2024). TikTok Affiliate is a marketing partner for sellers and earns income in the form of commissions from successful sales. An illustration of how TikTok Affiliate works can be seen in Figure 5 below:

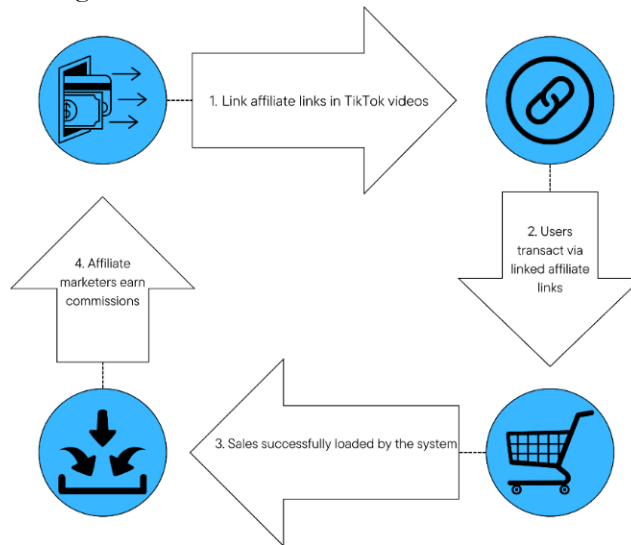


Figure 5. Illustration of How TikTok Affiliate Works

Source: Primary data, illustrations through observations

TikTok Affiliate is a TikTok program to initiate people to run a business without having to have a product to sell (Purborini, 2023). Affiliates will get profits in the form of a commission of 10% - 30% from every selling that occurs through the affiliated link. TikTok Affiliate is a content creator who uploads product videos and adds them to the showcase. In terms of running a business as a TikTok Affiliate, content creators can upload videos not only from one shop but from several shops at once. What differentiates between TikTok Affiliate and TikTok Seller is shown in Figure 6 as follows:

Tiktok Seller		Tiktok Affiliate
√	Profil Seller	√
√	Product Ratings	X
√	Chat	√
√	Managing Products	√
√	Add Products at Once	X
√	Manage Orders	√
√	Mass Delivery	X
√	Set Promotions	X

Figure 6. Difference between TikTok Seller and TikTok Affiliate

Source: Tiktok Shop Academy (2023), processed

TikTok Seller is the main seller and producer of products sold on TikTok, who have complete facilities from the TikTok Shop (Siswapranata & Mediawati, 2024). Meanwhile, TikTok Affiliates are often equated with content creators who only do marketing through promotional videos and distribute sales links that linked to TikTok Seller (Sibulan & Limos-Galay, 2024).

Based on the results of observations and interviews related to marketing optimization using the TikTok application for TikTok Affiliates, researchers found that there are three things that can increase the vibrant of a content made for marketing products through TikTok content: (1) creator consistency in uploading videos and interactions via live broadcasts; (2) having a specific – and made it specialized—marketing target, for example, specializing in beauty products, in contemporary fashion, or in cooking utensils; (3) creativity in producing entertaining videos as well as product promotions.

5. CONCLUSION

Through a series of analysis sourced from primary and secondary data in this research, it is concluded that TikTok is an effective and efficient application which can be used as a marketing medium by entrepreneurs, because it has a dual function namely an entertainment medium and online shopping medium, without having to use social media and e-commerce applications separately. TikTok not only provides facilities for entrepreneurs who have products to market their products on TikTok, as TikTok Seller, but also provides the opportunity to earn income for creators who do not produce their own products to sell but earn commissions as TikTok Affiliates.

This study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research was conducted in a limited geographical scope, focusing exclusively on three provinces in Sumatra (Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra). This restriction in geographic coverage may hinder the broader applicability of the results to other provinces on Sumatra Island or to different regions of Indonesia. A larger, more diverse sample from other provinces would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs across varying contexts within Indonesia.

Second, the study employed a qualitative research design relying on in-depth interviews with a small sample of six informants, including three TikTok sellers and three TikTok affiliates. While qualitative methods provide rich and context-specific insights, the relatively small sample size and limited diversity of the informants may introduce potential biases, limiting the representativeness of the findings. To address this limitation, future research could benefit from a more extensive sample size and a more diverse pool of informants, including entrepreneurs from different industries, scales of operation, and digital platform usage.

Third, the data collection process in this study primarily relied on qualitative interviews, which, although useful in exploring individual perspectives, may also be influenced by subjective biases inherent in the informants' responses. To mitigate this constraint, triangulation with secondary data and multiple data sources was employed; however, the findings remain susceptible to informant biases. Further studies could incorporate mixed methods approaches, combining qualitative data with quantitative measures to enhance the robustness and general applicability of the findings.

Moreover, the research focuses specifically on the use of TikTok as a marketing platform for entrepreneurship. However, the broader digital ecosystem includes various other platforms and tools that may offer equally significant opportunities for entrepreneurs. The evolving nature of digital marketing platforms, including changes in user behaviour and platform features, suggests that the findings presented in this study may become out-of-dated, as new platforms emerge or existing platforms evolve. Future

research should expand its scope to consider the impact of multiple digital platforms and compare their relative effectiveness in fostering entrepreneurship.

Finally, while this study investigates the role of TikTok in supporting entrepreneurial ventures through both sellers and affiliates, it does not assess the long-term economic sustainability of WoS. The research focuses on short-term strategies for business growth, yet the sustainability and profitability of businesses in the long term remain unexplored. Future studies could examine the long-term outcomes for businesses that utilize TikTok as their primary marketing tool, addressing questions related to profitability, business resilience, and market position over time.

Ethical approval

This research did not require ethical approval.

Informed consent statement

This research did not require informed consent.

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, PW; methodology, ARHKP., MM., and PW; validation, MM; formal analysis, PW; resources, MM; writing original draft preparation, PW., MM., ARHKP; writing review and editing, PW.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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