

# Partnership Pattern of Digital Collaboration between Regional Leaders and Micro Businesses

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## ABSTRACT

An effective collaboration between government regional leaders and entrepreneurs, which is believed to be a solution to accelerating micro business performance, needs to have both accessibility support and promotional outlet through social media. This study aimed to acquire a partnership pattern in improving such a collaboration in Belitung, Indonesia. Promotional reach through such social media outlets as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube within the fields of tourism, creative economy, and SMEs as well as its implication to the number of buyers of the micro entrepreneurship was experimented. The results showed that there was an improvement of micro business performance when the regional leaders facilitated them through digital promotion via unpaid social media accounts. This type of partnership pattern was possible to be massively implemented when there was supporting regulation as well as a variety of platforms in order to have wider reach of micro entrepreneurship performance particularly in Belitung.

**Keywords:** Digital collaboration, regional leaders, micro business, social media, business performance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The globalization era has required the society to prefer collaboration to competition as collaboration has become the main approach to solving complex public problems [1]. To this relation, governments have no exception and within the context of regional government, the local leaders are in need of conducting the most recent collaboration with all types of business scope ranging from big to small enterprises. In either developed or developing countries, local or regional leaders need to increase their awareness regarding the use of digital platforms to increase the business performance of micro businesses within their area of governance as increasing digitization has impacted various business activities by enabling new forms of collaboration as well as new forms of corporate relationships with customers and employees [2]. In addition, digitization represents a much more fundamental, and pervasive, transformation that seeks to create new sources of value by placing digital information at the core of the business [3]. It is widely known that social media is one of the most popular as well as effective tools to boost up promotion as it is a communication channel between individuals which enables the creation of interactive content on the Internet and cooperation and exchange by participants and the public [4]. Additionally, social media as one of the most powerful tools of networking across the Internet has merged with the social and economic aspects in the real world [5].

Studies have shown that social media as a part of digital collaboration have been implemented within the context of business and economics [6–8]. In terms of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), collaborative relationships can provide opportunities for SMEs to overcome some of the barriers to implementing environmental initiatives related to size, and/or other characteristics [9]. It is understandable as government assistance can take the form of providing information and business networks in interactive relationships that enable entrepreneurs to expand their operations and deal effectively with the market [10]. Research conducted by [11] SMEs in Ireland has proven that the use of social media adaptation as digital collaboration in their business was effective. Elsewhere, SMEs were using digital collaboration as a tool to improve customer service, find communications, spread advertisements, and strengthen brands [12]. Another study describing social media with SMEs was conducted and the results of a survey conducted on citizens in four countries (Australia, U.S., U.K., and India) showed that company innovation, company size, and industry sector are factors that have a significant impact on the adoption of social media tools in organizations [13]. There was also a study analyzing six Spanish and Italian SME fashion companies to understand how fashion brands implement their social media marketing strategies. The results of the study indicated that the importance of social media as part of a marketing strategy is the main driver of the implementation of social media marketing brands, and brand awareness is

the main goal to be achieved by SMEs [14]. Last but not least, a study was also conducted to investigate the relationship between internet-based social media and the competitive advantage of SMEs in the travel, restaurant, and hotel sectors. The results show that social media has improved customer service and relationships, and most say they have improved their products and services [15]

As literature showed that most previously-related studies put more focus on the use of social media in SMEs, this study is trying to fill the gap of the use of social media platform as a part of digital collaboration within the context of micro businesses or micro entrepreneurship. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to identify a partnership pattern of digital collaboration using a variety of social media platforms in boosting the business performance of micro entrepreneurship sector in Belitung, Indonesia.

## 2. METHODS

As this study aimed to discover an effective digital collaboration between the regional leaders and micro enterprises, an interview was administered to 50 local entrepreneurs in Belitung, Indonesia (see Table 1). Following the process was distribution of questionnaires via Google Form. There was no specific way of distribution of the questionnaire as the interpersonal relationship between the researchers and the participants, which were local micro entrepreneurs was quite close. The statements of the questionnaire were scaled from 1 to 4, in which 1 is the most negative and 4 is the most positive and the content was mainly on the commitment of the government to promote their business particularly in terms of the use of social media. In the meantime, the interview mainly focused on whether the implementation of unpaid social media outlet to boost their businesses was effective. The research site of Belitung was selected as it is one out of ten national tourism strategic areas as well as the fact that it is set to be a part of UNESCO Global Geopark.

Then observations were made on these micro-entrepreneurs and a Focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with the theme: Building collaboration and digital transformation in improving the business performance of micro-enterprises. The FGD involved stakeholders as resource persons and participants in the field of entrepreneurship and micro, small and medium enterprises including digital practitioners, which in this case were YouTubers and influencers in Belitung with either national or international scale. All the data collection process took place in October 2021.

The data that had been collected were then analyzed by qualitative data processing. The first stage was data reduction, where this stage focused on the process of selecting, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the raw data generated from the data collection process which would later be adapted to the needs and focus of the research. The second stage was data presentation, namely a description of a collection of information arranged in the

form of a narrative for drawing conclusions and making decisions, usually done with a brief description, chart or graph. While the third stage was drawing conclusions or verification, during the research each conclusion would be verified continuously until a valid conclusion is obtained.

**Table 1** Types of micro businesses and year of establishment of each participating company

<b>Type of micro-business</b>	<b>n</b>
Handicraft	13
Culinary (food and beverage)	16
Processed food	21
<b>Year of establishment of micro-business</b>	<b>n</b>
2021	5
2020	5
2019	6
2018	7
2017	4
2016	7
2015	4
< 2014	12

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *3.1. Local government support and alignment in terms of policies and regulations for micro-enterprises*

The findings found that half of the respondents (n=25) stated that there was strong support and partiality from the local government for their micro-enterprises. A total of 21 respondents stated moderate support and the rest stated weak (n=3) and no support (n=1). These results show that the support from the Belitung Regency government is felt so that it reflects that communication has been built between the two parties properly.

Government support programs help SMEs overcome financial and non-financial constraints that hinder their business operations while strengthening their entrepreneurial practices [16]. Local governments as policy makers design support programs for SMEs to develop entrepreneurial skills and gain access to enabling resources so that SMEs can more effectively and efficiently create jobs and develop economic opportunities [17].

### *3.2. Commitment of the local government in building collaborative partnerships with micro-enterprises*

As many as 40 percent of respondents (n=20) stated that there is a good commitment from local governments in building collaborations and partnerships with their businesses. More than half of the respondents (n=28) stated that there was sufficient commitment from the government and the rest stated that it was lacking (n=2). With these findings, it can be seen that the majority of micro

entrepreneurs have shown high trust in local governments in entrepreneurship. Responsibility or commitment must also be followed by a system of sustainability or sustainable development.

Government collaboration with micro business owners to provide support and assistance through policies and institutions. This cooperation will provide assistance to producers or distributors in an industry to prevent industry decline [18]. Government responsibility must be carried out actively on responsible and humane work practices in MSMEs. This responsibility is an active constitution of social security and benefits for workers and micro-enterprises which is a pragmatic necessity [19].

### ***3.3. Sustainability of the promotion and innovation policy of the local government***

Regarding the sustainability of promotion and innovation policies from local governments, a large number of respondents (n=30) stated that there was sustainability in terms of policies and promotions facilitated by local governments. However, there were also those who stated that sustainability related to policy was sometimes (n=10) and the rest stated that sustainability was not visible (n=20). These results show the inconsistency of local governments in accommodating micro-enterprises in terms of promotion and innovation which further becomes a challenge for local governments to seriously follow up on these results.

Commitment to sustainability is important for the government to business entities that will affect the existence, sustainability and size of the business [20].

### ***3.4. Ease of micro-enterprises related to legality and certification from the government***

Ease of legality and certification carried out by micro-entrepreneurs, half of the respondents (n=27) stated that it was easy to obtain legality and certification with good relations between micro-entrepreneurs and the government. Other respondents stated that only some of them have good relations with the government for legality and certification (n=15), while the rest have not felt the ease after the relationship between micro-enterprises and the government (n=8). This finding needs special attention for local governments to build a system of convenience for business actors in terms of managing these business documents. Because the government should be able to provide convenience for every business actor to encourage business development [21].

### ***3.5. Improving the competitiveness of micro-entrepreneurs with a system of training and mentoring***

Regarding improving competitiveness with the training and mentoring system provided, the majority of respondents (n=43) answered that the training and assistance provided could improve the competitiveness of their businesses.

Other respondents (n=7) answered that training and mentoring did not necessarily increase competitiveness. These results indicate that most micro-entrepreneurs have realized the importance of continuous training and mentoring for a positive impact on their business performance. Training and mentoring should be done for micro-enterprises. Training can help organizations to build and maintain a competitive advantage by increasing productivity, quality, and financial results. Similarly, mentoring can play an important role in supporting and driving businesses towards sustainability [22].

### ***3.6. Facilitating the partnership system of micro-entrepreneurs with financial institutions***

Regarding facilitating the partnership system with financial institutions, half of the respondents (n=28) answered that they have been facilitated and have built business partnerships with financial institutions. A total of 14 respondents answered that there was still a shortage of these facilities and other respondents (n = 8) answered that there were no facilities. Financial constraints are one of the main strong constraints that have an impact on business growth. One of the obstacles often faced by small companies is limited access to finance [23, 24]. Therefore, the provision of partnership facilities for micro-enterprises to financial institutions must be carried out by local governments. On the way to the development of micro-entrepreneurship, there are certain barriers, the main one of which is the lack of adequate financial resources for many potential and existing micro-entrepreneurs to start and develop their business [25].

### ***3.7. Information system integration and digital marketing system transformation***

Regarding information system integration and digital marketing transformation, as many as 14 respondents stated that their business was well integrated with information systems and digital marketing transformation. More than half (n=30) stated that they were quite good, and the rest (n=3) stated that they were less integrated and transformed well. These results indicate that currently their business has begun to transform into a digital marketing system, but some have not been accommodated in implementing a digital-based marketing system in running their business. Meanwhile, micro-enterprises must use digital platforms and technology to compete in their business [26]. Digitization represents a much more fundamental, and pervasive, transformation that seeks to create new sources of value by placing digital information at the core of the business [3].

### ***3.8. Social media and digital marketing improve business performance***

In this case, all respondents (n=50) stated that all of their current business continuity and performance is highly

dependent on social media and digital-based marketing. This is in line with the definition that social media marketing allows marketers to build brand awareness, to share knowledge and information, to acquire and retain customers and to initiate low-cost promotions and to engage with customers interactively [27].

When asked what digital platforms and social media are effective, some respondents (n=27) stated that Facebook as an effective social media in increasing the reach of their micro-enterprises and others stated that Instagram (n=13) and YouTube (n=6) is the most effective. effectively help increase reach.

Communication through social media channels is an efficient way to share information and change customer perceptions of a product, brand or company. In line with the characteristics of social media platforms, consumers can share their interest in their favorite brands through social media channels such as YouTube, and Facebook [28]. The high level of use and interaction of Social Media greatly affects the business environment which creates an increasingly wide network [29].

### ***3.9. The role of influencers in micro-enterprises and local governments as influencers for micro-enterprises***

In terms of the role of influencers in micro-enterprises, several respondents (n=19) stated that the role of influencers in their micro-enterprises was very important. The other half (n=26) stated that the role of influencers was quite important, and the rest (n=5) stated that the role of influencers was less important for their micro-enterprises. These results reflect the high level of awareness of respondents about the role of these influencers and will have an impact on increasing their income and access from the marketing side.

When asked about local governments acting as influencers, many respondents (n=38) stated that local governments can be influencers for their businesses and can benefit their micro-enterprises. While the rest (n=12) stated that it was not certain that they could benefit their business. These results indicate that local governments that already have a name, socio-political power, fame, popularity, and public trust greatly affect their efforts to make profits.

From the questions and findings above, we can see that the condition of most micro-enterprises cannot be separated from the role of local governments in terms of policies, local regulations, alignments, facilities, and other support tools that can open access to micro-enterprises in expanding their business reach and continue to improve its business performance.

A good local government must of course build a system that shows partiality based on the system, because with this system partiality does not depend on subjective individuals, especially if one day the regional head changes, most likely there will be no continuation of the existing alignment. This was found in interviews and observations with micro-entrepreneurs in Belitung who expressed their opinion about the system in favor of micro-enterprises and the

image of local leaders who came to give real support to their business.

### ***3.10. Regional Leaders Commitment***

In building a system that favors micro-enterprises, in the early stages a commitment from local leaders is needed. This commitment greatly affects the realization of a sustainable system that is used as a form of real support for the micro business climate.

Regional leaders or chief executive officers (CEOs) in their local government, must be tested for their commitment and consistency to micro-enterprises based on the importance of awareness to grow a local community-based economy that can create and empower optimally the utilization of natural resource potential, local wisdom raised as the basic philosophy and product peculiarities of micro-enterprises which of course can be a special attraction for potential tourists to become consumers when choosing to travel to the area.

The CEO's commitment shows that a leader at any level or CEO has several main tasks, namely setting direction, allocating resources, and carrying out execution.

### ***3.11. Digital Collaboration***

Government support for SMEs is a policy designed by the government and its regulatory agencies to regulate and guide decision-making processes that promote economic development by creating a sufficiently protected environment [30]. Governments are often faced with barriers of distance and time as well as data that provide up-to-date descriptions of the number of micro-entrepreneurs, the problems they face, and the needs of these actors.

In today's digital era, these obstacles can be overcome quite easily, but all of this is returned to the willingness and ability of the regional leaders themselves. Not all regional leaders are willing to adapt to existing changes, in fact digitalization has occurred in various lines of life, including within the local government system itself [31]. Digitization is a shortcut and bridge over the big obstacles faced by regional leaders to build collaboration with micro-entrepreneurs [32], this can be started using an already available platform.

Regional leaders can utilize and optimize the availability of access and human resources in the ranks of their regional apparatus organizations to become a digital team for micro-enterprises. Moreover, each region has a communications and informatics department, a public relations department, or information technology and computer personnel in each regional organization.

A simple way that can be started easily and effectively is to create a YouTube channel specifically for micro-entrepreneurs in the area. This YouTube channel can reach all people and ages according to the target market and the momentum that we will build and achieve. YouTube is one of the fastest growing and popular online platforms that is often used for marketing strategies to enhance the company's brand [33]. Although we often find that the

number of viewers and subscribers is not directly proportional to the number of people who will become consumers of the micro business. However, in the findings obtained in interviews conducted, the majority of micro-entrepreneurs felt a significant impact within 1 (one) month since their business coverage video was broadcast on YouTube.

The interesting thing that was found was that the presence and direct role of local leaders as hosts and influencers in guiding coverage programs, interviews and micro-business surgery had a major influence on the results achieved, because these direct appearances created strong and large public trust because these micro-enterprises seemed to be. They will and are even recognized to receive direct recommendations [34], while recommendations are urgently needed by micro-entrepreneurs to build the reputation of their micro-enterprises.

The need for the role of influencers greatly influences the psychological and practical impetus for micro-entrepreneurs. As in its definition, an influencer is someone who has the power to influence the decisions of others because he has authority, knowledge, position, or because of his relationship with the public or audience [35].

In business marketing, influencers are those who can influence people to buy certain products. Influencers are a fairly efficient promotion method, because everyone who is considered an influencer can target a more specific market niche [36]. However, if micro-entrepreneurs deliberately invite and even contract influencers, of course this will cost a lot and not in accordance with the financial capabilities of the micro-enterprises themselves. While the easy and inexpensive collaboration between regional leaders and micro entrepreneurs is clearly very beneficial for all parties [37], regional leaders are considered responsive and aspirational and care about micro-enterprises which will also increase the income of the community so that regional economic growth gets better and micro-entrepreneurs feel the impact of increasing business performance in terms of income, the number of customers as well as the liking and recognition of their micro-enterprises are getting higher.

This will open wide open access to reach the outside world, not only developing within the region but also outside the region. If tourists and consumers cannot come to the place of micro-entrepreneurs to transact, then their products must be present in the homes and places of these consumers.

The application of digital collaboration results in time, distance, and cost efficiencies as well as increasing and expanding market reach and facilitating desired market segmentation [3]. It all goes back to the commitment of the regional leaders who are present in collaborating with these micro-entrepreneurs in a contemporary way.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It has been proven that even within the limitations of the local government in terms of budgeting and policies, digital collaboration using social media outlets to boost the business performance of micro enterprises is urgently

required. This is also supported by the openness of micro-entrepreneurs to accept the digital method because it is easier to understand and implement according to the strategy of each entrepreneur in a simple way. Digital collaboration of regional leaders with micro-entrepreneurs is an effective way to create the courage of prospective micro-entrepreneurs to take their first steps into the business world, give opportunities to more regional startups, and increase the confidence of micro-entrepreneurs in developing their business in terms of power, competitiveness, and the reach of their business. In short, this paper proved that the pattern of digital collaboration between the regional government and the local micro entrepreneurs was likely top-down, at least for the initial part of a long-term collaboration.

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