



Creative Economy in a Pandemic: The Effectiveness of Moderation of Digital Transformation in Culinary SMEs in Langsa Aceh

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Abstract. This study examines the effectiveness of digital transformation of SMEs engaged in the culinary sector. Culinary tourism in Langsa City continues to grow, with a wide market ranging from students, and households, to industry causing many culinary destinations such as traditional and modern cafes to get high interest or interest from the community. This study aimed to analyze how SMEs product innovation affect people's buying interest and how digital transformation moderate the relationship between product innovations of SMEs in the culinary sub-sector of Langsa City and people's buying interest. We analyse one hundred consumers as respondents. There were two analytical techniques used, consisting of multiple linear regression analysis for the first hypothesis and moderated regression analysis for the second hypothesis. The results showed culinary SMEs had been innovating and being creative in the products offered. And affected buying interest. And, the digital transformation did not affect buying interest significantly because of culinary business in Langsa is still on a digital-based marketing strategy. Culinary SMEs have not used advances in digital technology in collaborating.

Keywords: Digital transformation · Buying interest · Product Innovation

1 Introduction

WHO on March 11, 2020 declared the COVID-19 pandemic which had a significant impact on community activities, especially economic activities. The business world is forced to adapt to all the rules of social restrictions to maintain its existence. One of the adaptations of business actors to face the pandemic is to maximize digital technology in business activities, including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. Based on research by Farhani and Chaniago and data from the Indonesian SMEs Association (Akumindo) in the first year of the pandemic, forty-seven percent of the total thirty million SMEs in Indonesia went bankrupt [1]. SMEs use digital technology to be able to innovate and survive during the pandemic, based on data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Cooperatives quoted from research by Farhani and Chaniago that around 15% of MSMEs have successfully transformed digitally and survived during the pandemic [1].

Digitalization is a must to maintain business consistency. Digitalization has become a driver of change amid the uncertain economic situation [2]. Research by Zhuang revealed that digitalization was currently changing the way we did business and interact, and had become part of human lifestyle [3]. One example of economic digitization is digital marketing [4] for example social media and so on. The use of digital technology makes it easier for business actors to reach consumers effectively, digital technology also helps make buying and selling transactions easier such as e-commerce platforms. Advances in digital technology make it easier for consumers to get the goods and services they want because the many choices available in the digital market. Technology helps consumer can find, and compare products only by relying on smartphones.

This study examines the effectiveness of digital transformation of SMEs engaged in the culinary sector. As reported by Bekraf & BPS, (2019), the culinary sub-sector contributes 30% of the total revenue of the tourism and creative economy sectors. In 2011, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy included culinary as one of the sub-sectors of the creative economy. The definition of culinary is the activity of preparing food which is a basic human activity to meet the needs of life [6]. To data compiled by the Creative Economy Agency in 2021 the culinary sector contributes to absorb the workforce, which is 49.54% compared to other creative sectors.

In Aceh, the culinary sector is the dominant sector occupied by the community with a percentage of 21.49% compared to others. The culinary sector is the leading sector in Langsa because Langsa City is famous as a city of services and trade. Langsa City is an educational city with a large number of students and students from outside the city participating in driving the community's economy, especially the culinary sector. Culinary tourism centers in Langsa City are located in the Merdeka field and Jalan Ahmad Yani, then now culinary destination points are starting to appear on Jalan Liliwangsa and Jalan Panglima Polim. Meanwhile, the culinary gift center is located in the coastal area of the city.

Culinary tourism in Langsa City continues to grow, with a wide market ranging from students, and households, to industry causing many culinary destinations such as traditional and modern cafes to get high interest or interest from the community. Product innovations continue to emerge starting from product variations, diverse cafe services, packaging, and price competition, SMEs who innovate can adapt to changes in the environment that are difficult to predict such as the current pandemic so that they can exist and improve their performance to be more optimal [7]. Despite experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, Langsa culinary SMEs will start using digital technology such as marketing using social media, using entrusting services in culinary shopping, and so on. Digital transformation supports innovations made by SMEs in terms of products, marketing, and processes. This study examines how the effectiveness of digital transformation supports innovations carried out by culinary SMEs in Langsa City in increasing buying interest. The research questions are as follows: 1) Does Langsa City's culinary SME product innovation affect people's buying interest? 2) Can digital transformation moderate the relationship between product innovations of SMEs in the culinary sub-sector of Langsa City and people's buying interest?

2 Relationship Digital Transformation, Product Innovation, and Buying Interest

2.1 The Effect of *Product Innovation on Buying Interest*

Product innovation makes it easier for consumers to differentiate, compare, and choose products, thereby generating interest in a product. However, if the product diversity is minimal, it causes boredom or consumer saturation [8],

In the research of several researchers [9]–[12] it is consumers who determined the quality of a product, and would make repeat purchases if they responded positively to the product so that product innovation had a positive role in buying interest.

From some of these opinions, the first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: There is a positive influence between the innovation of MSME products in Langsa City in the culinary sector on people's buying interest.

2.2 Digital Transformation Moderates Product Innovation and Buying Interest

Digital transformation can help sell products effectively because it can reach consumers faster, easier, more accurately, and more broadly [10]. The results of Angelita's research (2021) showed that consumer decisions, especially the youth segment, were influenced by digital transformation, for example, digital marketing strategies.

Digital transformation is also able to support innovation [13, 14]. In the digital era, product development is easier to do to find out consumer preferences so that companies can produce a product that is of interest to consumers.

From some of the research results above, the second hypothesis in this study is:

H2: Digital transformation effectively moderates the relationship between product innovation of SMEs in the culinary sub-sector of Langsa City and consumer buying interest.

The illustration of the hypothesis in this research is as follows: (Fig. 1).

3. Research Methods.

The population in this study was people who live in Langsa City. This study used purposive sampling, with the following criteria: 1) Minimum age of 17 years, 2) Respondents had smartphones and social media, and 3) Had been consumers of Culinary SMEs in Langsa City who used digital technology in their business activities. The population in

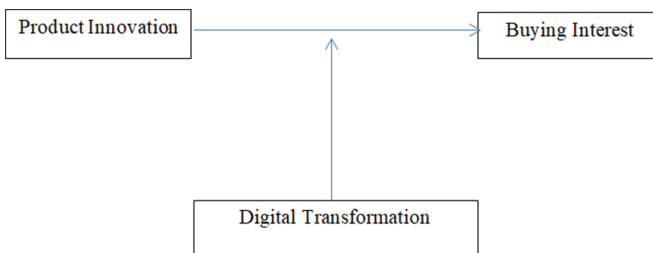


Fig. 1. Theoretical Framework

this research activity could not be defined in terms of numbers so a formula was needed to determine the number of respondents [15], the formulation was as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z\alpha^2 x(1-p)}{d^2} \quad (1)$$

Notes:

n: number of samples.

$Z\alpha$: score at 95% confidence = 1.96.

P : maximum estimated 50% (0.5).

d: sampling error = 10% (0,1).

Based on the formulation, the number of samples obtained was:

$$n = \frac{1,96^3 x 0,5 x (1 - 0,5)}{0,1^2} = \frac{3,8416 x 0,25}{0,01} = 96,04 \approx 97 (\text{dibulatkan } 100)$$

So the number of respondents in this study was one hundred.

Data collection using a questionnaire. The researcher combined a questionnaire consisting of print outs and google forms to facilitate data collection, considering that the number of respondents in this study was not clearly defined. The scale in the questionnaire was a Likert scale 1–5. There were two analytical techniques used, consisting of multiple linear regression analysis for the first hypothesis and moderated regression analysis for the second hypothesis. The interaction test or known as Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) was a multiple linear regression where the regression equation contains an interaction element (multiplication of two or more independent variables), the interaction element in this study was digital transformation as a moderating variable. The interaction test was used for the analysis of the second hypothesis.

The formula used in the MRA equation was as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_1 X_2 + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

Notes:

Y = Buying interest.

X_1 = Product Innovation.

X_2 = Digital Transformation.

$X_1 X_2$ = Interaction of product innovation with digital transformation variable as moderator.

ε = Error.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	44
	Female	56
Age	17 – 25	29
	26 – 34	34
	35 – 43	25
	44 – 50	8
	> 50	4
Profession	Civil servant	26
	Students	22
	Teacher	6
	Entrepreneurs	6
	Private workers	11
	Others	6

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Respondent Profile

Characteristics and profiles of respondents were in the Table 1.

Based on the characteristics of gender, the majority of respondents were women reached 56 percent. Women tended to like satisfactory service, easy transactions, and competitive prices. Female consumers had a more consumptive character and liked to look for new things when choosing goods and services.

In terms of age, the majority were in the age range of 26–34 years which reaches 34 percent where at this phase the respondents generally already had a fixed income and tended to behave consumptively. Widyanto explained that in the age group of 26 to 34 years, consumers were at the peak of enjoying income, so they did not hesitate to spend more funds for refreshing, one of which was culinary consumption [16].

In the professional aspect, the majority of respondents worked as civil servants 26%, followed by 24% students. Consumers with fixed incomes tended to have high ratings of a product in terms of service, price, quality, and packaging [17].

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

The researcher used descriptive analysis with mean and standard deviation. The descriptive analysis describes the data collected in the research process [18]. Descriptive statistics analyze the average weight of all respondents' answers to each statement on each variable, as well as each dimension and indicator of that variable [19]. The following were the results of the descriptive statistics in this study:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standar Deviation
Innovation Product	100	23.86	3.809
Digital Transformation	100	36.51	6.587
Buying Interest	100	20.26	3.323

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

The results in Table 2 showed that the mean value of the innovation variable was 23.86, which was greater than the standard deviation of 3.809. These results indicated that the data was unbiased and did not indicate large fluctuations. Likewise with the digital transformation variables and buying interest, each mean value was greater than the standard deviation score, so the conclusion was that the data in this study was unbiased and did not fluctuate greatly.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

Validity test is a measuring tool to see whether a measuring instrument can measure what it really wants to measure [20]. Validity testing is applied to the construct validity test, to find out whether the measuring instrument has met or is in accordance with the theory [21].

The results of the reliability test showed that the three variables had an alpha value of more than 0.60. With an alpha value greater than 0.60, the research variable meets the validity test [22]. Thus the reliability test requirements of this study have been met (Table 3).

As for the validity test, the value used is the corrected item-total correlation which is greater than the value of the r table. Testing the validity in this study using corrected item-total correlation, where the value of r table at 5% significance with two-sided test and $n = 100$ is 0.197.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Variabel	Alpha Score	Status
Innovation Product	0,845	Accepted
Digital Transformation	0,854	Accepted
Buying Interest	0,784	Accepted

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

Table 4. Validity Test

Indicator	R count	Status
<i>Product Innovation</i>		
1. Langsa Culinary UKM already offers a variety or choice of food flavors to buyers	.321	Valid
2. Food and beverages for culinary SMEs generally vary in size.	.398	Valid
3. Food and beverages for culinary SMEs are generally attractively designed	.375	Valid
4. The display of the presentation of the food and drinks served attracts consumers	.507	Valid
5. Culinary SMEs always improve services for visitors.	.539	Valid
6. Culinary SMEs make it easy for consumers to order food from drinks from home without the need to visit the location	.516	Valid
<i>Digital Transformation</i>		
1. Culinary SMEs are always active online in marketing food and beverage products.	.561	Valid
2. Culinary SMEs actively interact and respond quickly to online orders and consumer complaints	.536	Valid
3. Culinary SMEs are already using technology, for example in payment transactions using debit cards, e-wallets, and computerized transactions	.444	Valid
4. Culinary SMEs are currently serving consumers more practically by using digital technology	.410	Valid
5. Culinary SMEs collaborate with other entrepreneurs in providing services, such as order delivery services.	.541	Valid
<i>Buying Interest</i>		
1. Respondents like the cuisine in Langsa City, both the place and the taste.	.575	Valid
2. Respondents are often excited in trying variations of culinary products in Langsa City	.705	Valid
3. Respondents often have plans to visit several culinary locations in Langsa City	.751	Valid
4. Respondents visiting culinary locations not only fulfill the need to eat and drink but also relax	.539	Valid
5. Visiting culinary locations has become part of your needs and lifestyle	.300	Valid

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

3.4 Consumer Perceptions of the Ability of Culinary SMEs to Adapt to Digital Transformation

Based on the survey results, the following are consumer perceptions that assess the extent to which digital transformation adaptation and innovation in the culinary business are implemented in Langsa City (Table 4).

Based on the adaptability of culinary SMEs in carrying out digital transformation, five indicators were analyzed. Of the five indicators, digitizing the data got the highest actual score of 398 with a percentage comparison of the ideal score of 79.6%. This means that consumers perceive that culinary SMEs have implemented data digitization in doing business and providing services to consumers. Data digitization is creating a database for making various decisions ranging from market mapping, product and service determination, and so on [1, 23]. The Culinary UKM of Langsa City has started to implement data digitization, such as member cards applied by several cafes in Langsa to record customer transactions, financial bookkeeping applications, and inventory/stock applications so that data both customer data and transactions are digital. This is consistent with the research of [1, 24, 25] they explained that digitalization was needed by SMEs to adapt to environmental changes, one of which was the COVID-19 pandemic which causes digital transformation to be implemented more quickly by SMEs (Table 5).

The online presence indicator also received a good response from consumers, with a score of 374, and the comparison with the ideal score was 74.8%. The active presence online here is how culinary SMEs change traditional marketing methods into digital marketing. This is consistent with the research by [2, 14, 26, 27] showed that digital transformation brings disruptive changes in how businesses run, including in making adjustments to marketing activities. The culinary SMEs of Langsa City are gradually using online marketing, and have an active status. For example, Instagram belongs to a cafe business, a gift center, and updates in informing the new menu. SMEs also rely on online marketing to carry out transactions such as delivery services, receiving complaints, price promotions, and so on.

In the collaborative indicator, the score obtained is 338, with a comparison to the ideal score of 67.6%. Collaborative means that digitalization has an impact on increasing collaboration. Consumers consider that collaboration in digitizing culinary MSMEs has been running but has not gone well in terms of collaboration. In practice, SMEs still run their business without involving many other parties, such as online motorcycle taxi services, which can support ordering and delivery services. Culinary SMEs do not maximize the opportunity to collaborate to improve the services provided to consumers.

Operational simplification got a score of 374, or 74.8% compared to the ideal score. Consumers consider that this indicator has been implemented well by culinary SMEs, digitizing in payments, for example by utilizing fintech such as qris, shopeepay, internet banking, debit atm, and so on makes it easier for consumers to make payments. This result is in line with research by [28] that in addition to providing convenience for consumers in making payments, it also facilitates recording and transactions. Consumers have the perception that the Culinary MSMEs of Langsa City can follow technological developments not only in digital marketing but also take advantage of fintech, especially payment gateways.

Table 5. Consumer Perceptions of the Digital Transformation Adaptation of Culinary MSMEs

Indicator	Alternative Answers					Actual Score	Ideal Score	%	Status
	1	2	3	4	5				
1. Culinary SMEs are always active online in marketing food and beverage products.	2	8	30	34	26	374	500	74,8	Good
2. Culinary SMEs actively interact and respond quickly to online orders and consumer complaints	3	13	30	35	19	354	500	70,8	Good
3. Culinary SMEs are already using technology, for example in payment transactions using debit cards, e-wallets, and computerized transactions	5	18	31	26	20	338	500	67,6	Quite Good
4. Culinary SMEs are currently serving consumers more practically by using digital technology	2	12	20	42	24	374	500	74,8	Good
5. Culinary SMEs collaborate with other entrepreneurs in providing services, such as order delivery services.	2	3	20	45	30	398	500	79,6	Good

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

In business, SMEs that innovate will be able to lead the market and minimize the possibility of competitors to innovate early [29]. In measuring consumer perceptions of the adaptation of culinary MSME innovations, six indicators are used: Modulation-based innovation, Size-based innovation, Packaging-based innovation, Design-based innovation, Complementary material development-based innovation, and effort reduction-based innovation.

3.5 Moderated Regression Analysis

Model 1

In the equation in model 1, the results of data processing showed that the innovations made by the culinary SMEs of Langsa City had a positive and significant effect on consumer buying interest. The results were in Table 6 as follows:

The results of model 1 showed that the first hypothesis which stated that product innovation had a positive significance is accepted. These results were consistent with research by [9]–[11] that if SMEs innovate, they could increase consumer buying interest. From these results, consumers as respondents had positive perceptions about the innovation of Culinary SMEs in Langsa City.

Culinary innovation is applied to taste, packaging, and presentation [29, 30]. The results of research [31] showed that consumer perceptions of culinary SME products were

Table 6. Model 1 Result

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.436	1.753		4.814	.000
	Product Innovation	.496	.073	.568	6.831	.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

Table 7. Model Two Results

Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.804	8.587		1.142	.256
	Product Innovation	.233	.370	.267	.631	.530
	Digital Transformation	.047	.238	.093	.196	.845
	Moderating	.004	.010	.285	.366	.715

a. Dependent Variable: Minat_beli

influenced by packaging and product innovations created by culinary SME actors. This was following the conditions in the Culinary UKM in the city of Langsa which includes the gift center for the restaurant/cafe business. Culinary SMEs were quite competitive in innovating on packaging and presentation. The results of this study indicated that the packaging and presentation of SME culinary products were one of the reasons consumers made purchases, with attractive packaging, aesthetic presentation, and the atmosphere at the serving location that could encourage consumers to visit and make purchases.

Model 2.

In model two, the test proved the second hypothesis which stated that digital transformation effectively moderated the relationship between product innovation of SMEs in the culinary sub-sector of Langsa City and consumer buying interest. The results were in the Table 7:

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	404.001	3	134.667	18.757	.000 ^b
	Residual	689.239	96	7.180		
	Total	1093.240	99			

(continued)

(continued)

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

From the above results, the moderating variable, which was the interaction of digital transformation and product innovation, did not significantly moderate the relationship between innovation and consumer buying interest partially. Meanwhile, the simultaneous test showed that all variables had a significant effect on buying interest. These results were inconsistent with research by [10, 13].

Based on observations, consumers' perception define that the definition of digital transformation is not only from the aspect of digital marketing but also progress in the use of digital payments during transactions. In addition, the presence of online couriers or motorcycle taxis was a concern for respondents. And when culinary SMEs in Langsa City are still not familiar with fintech in daily transactions. These results also support the descriptive statistics above where the collaborative indicator, the score obtained is 338, with a comparison of the ideal score of 67.6%. Collaborative mean that digitalization has an impact on increasing collaboration. Consumers consider that there has been collaboration in digitizing culinary SMEs but it was not yet optimal. In practice, culinary SMEs run their business without involving other parties, such as online motorcycle taxi services, which can support ordering and delivery services. Culinary SMEs do not maximize the opportunity to collaborate to improve the services provided to consumers.

In such a situation, the development of digital technology should be maximized in supporting the existence and development of businesses, this is because consumers/audiences are currently a generation equipped with internet-based intelligent technologies so that downloading information becomes easier and faster which course affects how to choose and transact. [32].

4 Conclusion

Culinary SMEs show that they have been innovating and being creative in the products offered. Product innovations ranging from taste, packaging, size, and so on are considered quite good and competitive, it shows that business actors can adapt to the intense competition in the culinary subsector and get a positive response from consumers.

The digital transformation of culinary business actors in Langsa is still on a digital-based marketing strategy. Culinary SMEs have not used advances in digital technology in collaborating, such as the use of digital payments, online couriers, and so on. So that the various innovations that have been carried out are quite intense, and are still not maximized digitally.

SMEs must maximize and utilize digital technology in integrated business activities, which means that technological advances allow businesses to collaborate by utilizing digital technology both in services to consumers, digitizing data, adapting financial technology, and so on.

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