



Digital Marketing Strategy in Digital Business to Enhance MSME Competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital business presents significant opportunities for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to enhance their competitiveness. However, many MSMEs still face challenges in effectively implementing digital marketing strategies due to limited capabilities and strategic orientation. **This study aims** to analyze the role of digital marketing strategies in improving MSME competitiveness within the digital business environment, with a particular focus on the mediating role of digital capabilities. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from MSME actors engaged in digital business activities. **The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** to examine the relationships between digital marketing strategies, digital capabilities, and competitiveness. The findings reveal that digital marketing strategies have a significant positive effect on MSME competitiveness. Additionally, digital capabilities play a crucial mediating role, strengthening the impact of marketing strategies on competitive performance. The results highlight the importance of adopting integrated, data-driven, and customer-oriented digital marketing practices to achieve sustainable competitiveness. **This study contributes** to the growing literature on digital business and MSME development by providing empirical evidence on the interplay between strategy and capability. Managerially, the findings suggest that MSMEs should invest in developing digital skills and strategic marketing approaches to remain competitive in an increasingly dynamic digital landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the way businesses operate, including in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector. Digitalization enables MSMEs to expand their market reach, increase promotional efficiency, and build more interactive communications with consumers through various digital platforms. In the context of increasingly fierce competition, implementing a digital marketing strategy is a crucial effort for MSMEs to increase the competitiveness of local products in the market. The communication strategy, along with the development of technology, can affect the welfare of the MSMEs themselves [1]. However, many MSMEs have yet to optimize the strategic use of digital marketing.

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Digital marketing, intellectual capital, item innovation, and competitive advantage are some of the tactics used to boost the achievement of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) [2].

This situation means that the potential of quality local products is not yet fully recognized by the wider market. The role of digital marketing provides opportunities to leverage these platforms to create connections and build relationships with consumers, as well as increase brand awareness and consumer loyalty [3]. Thus, digital marketing is an essential element in business marketing strategies [4]. The competitiveness of local products is a crucial aspect in maintaining the sustainability of MSMEs in the digital era. Furthermore, digital technology plays a crucial role in supporting innovation processes, such as leveraging e-commerce platforms and social media to expand markets. Competitive local products are determined not only by product quality, but also by the ability of business actors to utilize digital technology to build brand image, increase product visibility, and reach consumers more effectively [5]. Therefore, companies need to have a deep understanding of their market and target consumers. This lack of understanding can hinder their efforts to optimize customer service through e-marketing and business innovation [6].

The originality of this work lies in positioning digital marketing as an integral component of business innovation that strengthens MSME competitiveness, rather than merely as a marketing tool or technological instrument [7]. Although prior studies have shown that digital marketing improves visibility and market reach, that training enhances digital literacy, and that MSMEs face resource and technological constraints, these elements are often examined separately [8]. An integrated perspective is offered by demonstrating how digital marketing practices, enabling factors, and structural barriers interact, shaping the sustainability and effectiveness of adoption. Digital marketing is thus understood as a dynamic, gradual, and practice-based innovation process rather than a one-time technological shift. An empirical pattern also emerges in which MSMEs participating in structured training adopt digital marketing incrementally from basic platform use to more interactive and evaluative practices despite ongoing constraints [9]. The contextual contribution is reflected in the Tangerang setting, where government and community led training initiatives play a central role in sustaining digital marketing as a competitiveness oriented business innovation for local products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital marketing is a marketing approach that utilizes various digital technologies to convey product information to consumers effectively and widely, through the use of digital platforms such as social media, marketplaces, and websites as promotional media or means of interaction with customers [1]. In MSMEs that promote local products, digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in highlighting the uniqueness of local culture and distinctive product characteristics, making them more attractive in the market [10]. Furthermore, digital adoption can also build rapport with consumers through more interactive communication. However, the success of digital marketing implementation is greatly influenced by the level of understanding and ability of MSMEs to optimally manage digital technology [11]. In this context, the adoption of digital marketing by MSMEs also contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through strengthening MSME competitiveness and economic opportunities, as well as SDG 9 through the utilization of digital technologies and innovation in business practices.

2.1. Digital Marketing in MSMEs

Digital marketing is a marketing activity that utilizes digital technology and online platforms to reach consumers more widely and efficiently [12]. In the context of MSMEs, digital marketing includes the use of social media, marketplaces, and websites as a means of promotion, communication, and transactions [13]. In the context of MSMEs in Indonesia, especially those focused on local culture, product innovation does not only cover technical or functional aspects but also involves the creation of unique aesthetic and cultural values [14]. Digital media and community-based approaches can also help expand market reach and increase the competitiveness of MSMEs. However, the effectiveness of digital marketing is highly dependent on the ability of MSME actors to understand and manage digital technology appropriately [15].

2.2. Competitiveness of Local Products

The competitiveness of local products refers to a product's ability to survive and excel in market competition. Competitiveness is determined not only by product quality, but also by marketing strategy, brand image, price, and market access [16]. In the digital era, product competitiveness depends on a business's ability

to leverage digital technology as a marketing tool. Digital marketing is a crucial strategy for strengthening the position of local products amidst increasingly fierce competition [17]. To address the lack of operationalization, competitiveness is explicitly defined as the ability of MSMEs to strengthen and sustain their market position through measurable marketing-related performance improvements in a digital context. Within this qualitative framework, competitiveness is operationalized through several observable indicators, including increased product visibility (growth in social media engagement and online presence), expanded market reach beyond local boundaries, enhanced brand differentiation through digital content strategies, improved customer interaction and responsiveness, and perceived improvements in sales opportunities following digital marketing adoption [18, 19].

2.3. Business Innovation

Business innovation does not always refer to new product imaging, but can be the implementation of new ways of carrying out business activities, including marketing strategies [20]. Digital marketing can be viewed as a business innovation because it can transform traditional marketing strategies into more adaptive and technology-based ones [21]. Through business innovation, entrepreneurs are expected to be able to improve operational and marketing efficiency, as well as create added value for the products they offer [22]. Competitiveness is conceptualized as the ability of MSMEs to sustain and enhance market position through improved visibility, market reach, brand differentiation, and adaptive marketing performance in a digital environment. Business innovation is framed in line with innovation theory as the implementation of new or significantly improved business processes, particularly in marketing activities, that enable firms to respond to changing market conditions. Within this perspective, digital marketing is positioned not merely as an operational practice, but as a strategic capability that reflects the firms capacity to integrate digital tools, knowledge, and routines into value creation and market engagement [23]. The conceptual relationship among these elements is understood as a sequential and reinforcing process, where digital marketing capabilities drive business innovation in marketing practices, which in turn enhances MSME competitiveness [24]. This theoretical integration provides an analytical lens that connects digital capability development, innovation processes, and competitive outcomes, thereby guiding the interpretation of empirical findings [25].

3. METHOD

The research design follows a quantitative approach to systematically analyze the structural relationships between the variables identified in the conceptual framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, in this model, Digital Marketing Strategies serves as the independent variable, while MSME Competitiveness is positioned as the dependent variable [26]. To better understand the mechanism through which marketing efforts translate into competitive advantage, Digital Capabilities is integrated as a mediating variable [27]. As depicted, this framework allows for the testing of three primary hypotheses the relationship between strategy and capability (H1), the impact of capability on competitiveness (H2), and the direct influence of marketing strategy on competitiveness (H3).

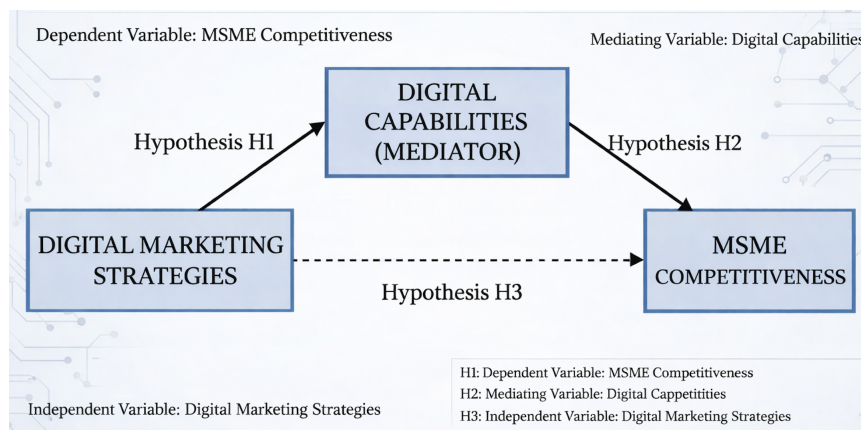


Figure 1. Research Framework

Data were collected through a survey-based method involving MSME actors who are actively participating in the digital business landscape. To analyze the complex interplay between these constructs, this study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) [28]. This statistical technique is utilized to simultaneously evaluate the measurement model for data validity and reliability, as well as the structural model to verify the significance of the proposed paths. By applying SEM, the study specifically examines the mediating role of digital capabilities in strengthening the overall impact of digital marketing strategies on the sustainable

Table 1. Data on MSMEs Involved in Digital Marketing Programs in Tangerang City

No	Programs/Activities	Location	MSMEs/Participants	Digital Marketing Strategy Indicators
1.	Communication and Information Technology Office Digital Marketing Webinar	Tangerang City	1,000 MSME Participants	Digital marketing & social media training
2.	PKK UP2K Digital Marketing Training	Tangerang City	143 MSME Participants	Marketing practices via TikTok and digital content
3.	Digital Marketing Training for MSMEs in Tangerang Regency	Tangerang Regency	30 MSME Participants	Basic digital marketing education

Table 1 illustrates various digital marketing programs and activities implemented to support MSMEs in the Tangerang region, both in the City and Regency of Tangerang. In general, the data in the table demonstrates a commitment from government agencies and related institutions to improving MSME digital capacity through structured webinars and training [29]. The Digital Marketing Webinar conducted by the Tangerang City Communication and Information Office reached approximately 1,000 MSMEs, focusing on providing them with digital marketing concepts and utilizing social media as a promotional tool [30]. Meanwhile, training conducted by the Tangerang City Family Welfare Movement (PKK UP2K) involved 143 MSME participants and emphasized hands-on marketing practices through popular platforms like TikTok and digital content management. At the Tangerang Regency level, the MSME Digital Marketing Training, attended by 30 MSMEs, focused on basic digital marketing education as the initial stage of technology adaptation [31]. Overall, this table demonstrates that the digital marketing strategies implemented by MSMEs in Tangerang are not only conceptual but also practical and gradual, thus supporting the increased competitiveness of local products through digital-based business innovation. Table 1 is based on documented institutional records of digital marketing programs conducted in the Tangerang area and serves to contextualize the research setting, rather than representing respondent data.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The data analysis was conducted in two stages the assessment of the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The measurement model confirmed that all constructs Digital Marketing Strategies (DMS), Digital Capabilities (DC) and MSME Competitiveness (MC) met the criteria for convergent validity, with factor loadings exceeding 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.50.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistics
H1	DMS \rightarrow DC	0.584	8.421
H2	DC \rightarrow MC	0.412	5.103
H3	DMS \rightarrow MC	0.325	4.215

The results of the hypothesis testing, as illustrated in the path analysis below, indicate that all proposed relationships are statistically significant. As shown in Table 2, the direct effect of Digital Marketing Strategies on MSME Competitiveness (H3) is significant. However, the indirect effect through Digital Capabilities (H1 and H2) shows a higher cumulative impact, suggesting a partial mediation effect.

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that Digital Marketing Strategies significantly enhance MSME Competitiveness. This aligns with the initial conceptual framework presented in Figure 1, where strategic digital initiatives act as a catalyst for business growth. The acceptance of H1 and H2 highlights

the "Mediator" role of Digital Capabilities. This suggests that simply adopting digital marketing tools is not enough; MSMEs must also possess the internal capability such as technical literacy, data management, and digital infrastructure to effectively convert those strategies into competitive advantages. As shown in the results, Digital Capabilities strengthen the relationship between marketing efforts and market performance, acting as an essential bridge in the digital ecosystem. Furthermore, the significant result of H3 confirms that even without high-level capabilities, basic digital marketing presence provides an immediate boost to competitiveness. However, for long-term sustainability, the integration of digital skills remains paramount. Managerially, these results imply that stakeholders should not only focus on external marketing spend but also invest in human capital and digital training to maximize their strategic outcomes.

This thematic organization allows the results to be interpreted through a theoretical lens rather than presented descriptively. Previous research suggests that digital marketing increases market reach and visibility, however, these findings extend existing studies by demonstrating how capability development, training participation, and institutional support dynamically interact to shape sustainable innovation practices among MSMEs [32]. The analysis also reveals unique local dynamics in Tangerang, where government-led webinars and community-based initiatives significantly influence the speed and depth of digital marketing adoption [33]. Unlike contexts where digital transformation occurs organically or is market-driven, the Tangerang case highlights a semi-structured transformation model where institutional facilitation plays a central role in bridging capability gaps. By linking the thematic findings with perspectives on innovation and strategic capabilities, the discussion moves beyond concept-driven descriptions to a more theoretically grounded explanation of how digital marketing contributes to competitiveness within a specific regional ecosystem [34]. Through the use of digital media, MSMEs can expand their market reach, increase product visibility, and build a stronger brand image. Local products that were previously known only in a limited environment now have the opportunity to be recognized by a wider consumer base. Thus, digital marketing functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a means of business innovation that supports the sustainability and competitiveness of MSMEs in the digital era [35].

4.2. Implementation of Digital Marketing in MSMEs

The implementation of digital marketing strategies among MSMEs in the Tangerang region has begun to develop, particularly among MSMEs that have participated in digital marketing training and briefing programs organized by the local government and related institutions. Based on observations and documentation of activities, MSMEs generally utilize social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp Business, TikTok, and marketplaces as the primary means of promoting local products. Digital marketing is used not only to increase product visibility but also as a means of direct communication with consumers [36]. However, the level of digital marketing utilization varies, depending on the availability of resources, experience, and understanding of digital technology among business actors.

Table 3. Digital Platforms Utilized by MSMEs for Marketing Activities

Digital Platform	Main Function	Marketing Activities	Observed Benefits
Instagram	Product promotion	Photo posts, reels, product catalog	Increased product visibility
WhatsApp Business	Customer communication	Direct messaging, order confirmation	Faster customer interaction
TikTok	Promotional content	Short promotional videos	Higher audience engagement
Marketplace (Shopee/Tokopedia)	Online transactions	Product listing and digital payment	Expanded market reach

Table 3 presents the main digital platforms utilized by MSMEs to support their marketing activities in the digital environment. The table shows that social media and online marketplaces play an important role in promoting local products, facilitating customer communication, and supporting online transactions. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are primarily used to create visual promotional content and increase product visibility, while WhatsApp Business enables direct interaction with customers. Meanwhile, marketplaces such as Shopee and Tokopedia support the transaction process and expand market reach. The use of multiple digital platforms demonstrates how MSMEs integrate various digital tools to enhance marketing effectiveness and improve their competitiveness in the digital marketplace [37].

4.3. Digital Marketing Strategy Practices Implemented by MSMEs

This section describes the various digital marketing channels and practices adopted by the MSME respondents. Based on the survey data, it was found that the adoption of digital marketing is heavily concentrated

on social media platforms and e-commerce integration, while more technical strategies such as SEO remain less utilized.

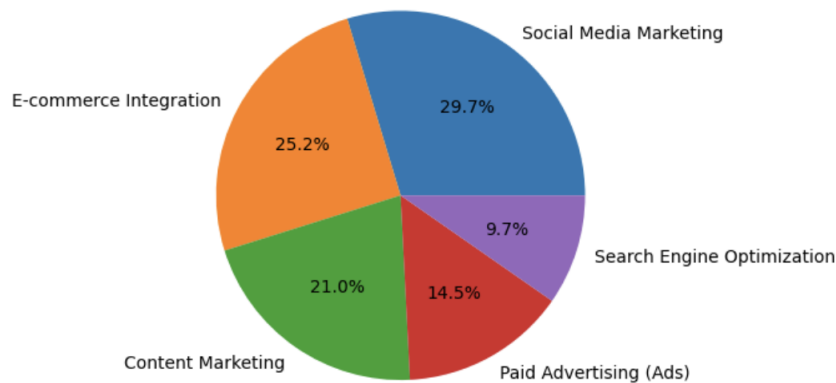


Figure 2. Pie Chart of Digital Marketing Strategy Practices Implemented by MSMEs

As shown in Figure 2, Social Media Marketing is the most dominant practice, with 29.7% of respondents utilizing platforms like Instagram and TikTok to engage with customers. This high adoption rate is attributed to the low barrier to entry and the direct interaction these platforms offer. E-commerce integration follows closely at 25.2%, indicating a strong transition from offline to online sales channels among MSMEs.

The visualization in the figure above illustrates the ecosystem of digital marketing practices identified in this study. While basic tools like social media are widely used, there is a clear gap in the implementation of advanced strategies such as SEO and data-driven paid advertising. The findings suggest that while MSMEs are digitally "active," their strategic orientation is still primarily focused on front-end engagement rather than long-term technical optimization. This distribution of practices serves as the foundation for the subsequent analysis of how these strategies influence the internal digital capabilities of the firms.

4.4. Supporting Factors for Digital Marketing Implementation

Key supporting factors in the implementation of digital marketing strategies by MSMEs include digital marketing training programs and webinars that provide basic knowledge to business owners, local government support through mentoring activities, and increased awareness among MSMEs of the importance of digital marketing for market expansion [38]. Furthermore, easy access to digital platforms and social media is also a factor encouraging MSMEs to adopt digital-based marketing strategies as a form of business innovation [39].

Table 4. Key Supporting Factors and Their Impact on Digital Marketing Adoption

Supporting Factor	Description	Impact on MSMEs
Digital marketing training	Webinars and training programs organized by government and institutions	Improves digital literacy and marketing knowledge
Government support	Mentoring programs and MSME development initiatives	Encourages adoption of digital tools and platforms
Access to digital platforms	Availability of social media and online marketplaces	Facilitates easier product promotion and marketing
Awareness of digital marketing importance	Growing understanding among MSME owners about online marketing benefits	Leads to more consistent digital marketing practices

Table 4 summarizes the main supporting factors that facilitate the adoption of digital marketing strategies among MSMEs. The findings indicate that digital marketing training programs, government support, and access to digital platforms play a crucial role in improving MSMEs' digital capabilities. These factors contribute to increased digital literacy, encourage the use of digital marketing tools, and promote more consistent online marketing practices. In addition, the growing awareness among MSME owners regarding the

importance of digital marketing further supports the sustainability of digital transformation and strengthens the competitiveness of local products in the digital economy.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of digital marketing strategies has significant managerial implications for MSMEs in enhancing the competitiveness of local products. In an increasingly digital business environment, MSMEs are required not only to adopt digital tools but also to strategically integrate them into their overall business operations. This means that digital platforms should be utilized not merely as channels for promotion, but as comprehensive instruments for brand building, customer engagement, and long term relationship management. Therefore, improving digital literacy becomes a critical priority. MSME actors must develop competencies in content creation, social media management, and digital performance analysis to ensure that their marketing efforts are both effective and sustainable. Moreover, MSMEs are encouraged to design and implement more structured and well-planned digital marketing strategies. This process should begin with a clear identification of target markets, followed by the selection of the most relevant and impactful digital platforms based on consumer behavior. Developing a consistent and sustainable content calendar is also essential to maintain audience engagement and brand visibility. With proper planning, MSMEs can optimize the use of limited resources, including time, budget, and human capital, which are often major constraints in small-scale businesses. In addition, continuous monitoring and evaluation of digital marketing performance are crucial to measure effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. MSMEs should utilize available analytics tools to track key performance indicators such as engagement rates, conversion rates, and customer reach. Regular evaluation allows business owners to make data-driven decisions and adapt their strategies to changing market dynamics. Finally, the role of external support cannot be overlooked. Support from local governments, educational institutions, and MSME development organizations is vital in providing training, mentoring, and access to digital infrastructure. Such collaborative efforts will help ensure the optimal implementation of digital marketing strategies and contribute significantly to strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of local MSMEs in the digital era.

6. CONCLUSION

Digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in increasing the competitiveness of local MSME products as a form of business innovation in the modern economic landscape. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and shifting consumer behavior, MSMEs are required to adapt in order to remain relevant and competitive. Research findings indicate that MSMEs that have implemented digital marketing particularly through social media and various digital platforms are able to significantly enhance product visibility, reach broader and more diverse market segments, and establish stronger, more interactive relationships with consumers. Through consistent digital engagement, MSMEs can better understand customer preferences, respond to feedback in real time, and build long-term customer loyalty.

Furthermore, digital marketing is not merely a promotional tool but also a strategic innovation that supports business transformation. By leveraging digital technologies, MSMEs can create unique brand identities, develop more personalized marketing campaigns, and improve overall business efficiency. The use of digital platforms also enables MSMEs to compete not only at the local level but also in regional and even global markets. This transformation highlights the importance of integrating digital marketing into core business strategies rather than treating it as an optional or supplementary activity. The implementation of digital marketing strategies in MSMEs is influenced by several supporting factors. One of the most important factors is the level of digital literacy among business actors. MSME owners and managers who possess adequate digital skills are more capable of utilizing online tools effectively, from content creation to data analysis. In addition, access to training programs, workshops, and mentoring initiatives plays a vital role in enhancing these capabilities. Support from government agencies, educational institutions, and MSME development organizations contributes significantly to accelerating digital adoption. Easy access to digital infrastructure, such as affordable internet services and user-friendly platforms, further facilitates the implementation process.


However, despite these advantages, MSMEs still face several challenges in adopting digital marketing strategies. Limited financial resources, lack of skilled human capital, and resistance to change can hinder the effective use of digital tools. Some MSME actors may also struggle with maintaining consistency in content


creation and managing multiple digital platforms simultaneously. Therefore, continuous capacity building and practical guidance are necessary to ensure that MSMEs can fully benefit from digital marketing opportunities. This study also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of a descriptive qualitative approach means that the research does not provide a precise quantitative measurement of the impact of digital marketing on business performance indicators such as revenue growth, profitability, or customer retention. Additionally, the scope of the research is relatively limited, as it focuses only on MSMEs within a specific region. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the conditions of MSMEs in other regions with different economic, social, and technological contexts. The data used in this study is also descriptive and exploratory in nature, which limits the ability to generalize the results to a broader population.


Based on these findings and limitations, further research is strongly recommended. Future studies should consider using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to obtain more comprehensive and measurable insights into the impact of digital marketing strategies on MSME performance. For instance, researchers can analyze the relationship between digital marketing adoption and key performance indicators such as sales growth, market expansion, customer engagement, and brand loyalty. Expanding the research scope to include MSMEs from various regions and sectors would also provide a more holistic understanding of digital marketing adoption across different contexts. In addition, future research could explore the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and automation in enhancing the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies for MSMEs. The importance of continuous mentoring, digital ecosystem development, and collaboration among stakeholders should also be examined in greater depth. By addressing these aspects, future studies can contribute to the development of more effective policies and practical strategies that support the sustainable digital transformation of MSMEs, ultimately strengthening their competitiveness in both local and global markets.

7. DECLARATIONS

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7.2. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: HS; Methodology: SA; Software: HS; Validation: DE and SA; Formal Analysis: HS and SA; Investigation: HS; Resources: SA; Data Curation: DE; Writing Original Draft Preparation: SA and HS; Writing Review and Editing: SA and DE; Visualization: HS; All authors, HS, SA, and DE, have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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7.4. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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