

A Systematic Literature Review On Social Media Utilisation And Technology Readiness For Enhancing Marketing Capabilities Of Fashion And Tailoring SMEs

Jundian Priyatin¹✉, Rina Febriana², Yeni Sesnawati³

Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jl Rawamangun Muka, East Jakarta, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

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Abstrak

Studi ini menyajikan tinjauan literatur sistematis (SLR) yang meneliti bagaimana penggunaan media sosial dan kesiapan teknologi meningkatkan kemampuan pemasaran UKM di bidang fesyen dan penjahitan. Karena platform digital semakin membentuk perilaku konsumen dan persaingan, banyak UKM, khususnya di sektor fesyen dan penjahitan, menghadapi tantangan dalam mengadopsi dan mengoptimalkan media sosial untuk pemasaran. Menggunakan protokol tinjauan berbasis PRISMA, penelitian ini menganalisis studi yang ditinjau sejawat yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2013 dan 2024 di berbagai basis data akademik utama. Sebanyak artikel terpilih yang memenuhi kriteria inklusi disintesis melalui analisis tematik kualitatif. Temuan mengungkapkan tiga tema dominan: (1) media sosial berfungsi sebagai alat pemasaran strategis dan hemat biaya yang mendukung keterlibatan pelanggan, visibilitas merek, dan promosi produk; (2) kesiapan teknologi, yang terdiri dari kompetensi teknologi, infrastruktur digital, dan dukungan manajerial, secara signifikan memengaruhi kemampuan UKM untuk mengadopsi alat pemasaran digital; dan (3) integrasi media sosial dan kesiapan teknologi yang memadai memperkuat kemampuan pemasaran UKM, khususnya dalam pengamatan pasar, manajemen hubungan pelanggan, dan diferensiasi produk. Ulasan ini memberikan kontribusi secara teoritis dengan memetakan titik temu antara adopsi digital dan pengembangan kemampuan, serta secara praktis dengan menawarkan wawasan bagi praktisi UKM dan pembuat kebijakan untuk mendukung transformasi digital di industri mode dan penjahitan.

Kata kunci: Pemanfaatan Media Sosial, Kesiapan Teknologi, Kemampuan Pemasaran, UKM Mode

Abstract

This study presents a systematic literature review (SLR) examining how social media use and technology readiness enhance the marketing capabilities of fashion and tailoring SMEs. As digital platforms increasingly shape consumer behaviour and competition, many SMEs, particularly in the fashion and tailoring sectors, face challenges in adopting and optimising social media for marketing. Using a PRISMA-based review protocol, this research analysed peer-reviewed studies published between 2013 and 2024 across major academic databases. A total of selected articles meeting the inclusion criteria were synthesised through qualitative thematic analysis. The findings reveal three dominant themes: (1) social media functions as a strategic and cost-effective marketing tool that supports customer engagement, brand visibility, and product promotion; (2) technology readiness, comprising technological competence, digital infrastructure, and managerial support, significantly influences SMEs' ability to adopt digital marketing tools; and (3) the integration of social media and adequate technology readiness strengthens SMEs' marketing capabilities, particularly in market sensing, customer relationship management, and product differentiation. This review contributes theoretically by mapping the intersection between digital adoption and capability development, and practically by offering insights for SME practitioners and policymakers to support digital transformation in the fashion and tailoring industry.

Keywords: Social Media Utilisation, Technology Readiness, Marketing Capabilities, Fashion SMEs



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✉Corresponding author : Jundian Priyatin

Email Address : jundianpriyatin@gmail.com

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Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has significantly reshaped the competitive landscape for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the creative industries, particularly in segments like fashion and tailoring. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, have emerged as vital marketing tools that enable SMEs to promote products, engage with customers, and build their brands at relatively low costs. The capabilities offered by these digital tools provide SMEs with unique opportunities to enhance their marketing efforts and reach broader audiences (Amoah et al., 2021; Lukitaningsih et al., 2024; Taufik et al., 2024).

However, the successful adoption and integration of these digital tools are closely tied to the concept of technology readiness. This encompasses not just the availability of technology, but also the willingness, competence, and preparedness of business owners to utilise such innovations (Maharjan et al., 2024; Taufik et al., 2024). For many fashion and tailoring SMEs, challenges arise from limited digital skills, financial constraints, and poorly defined strategies for leveraging social media to gain a competitive advantage (Maharjan et al., 2024; Patma et al., 2021).

Many studies have explored digital technology adoption among SMEs, yet findings are notably fragmented. Empirical evidence regarding the interplay between technological readiness and social media utilisation remains underdeveloped. This gap is particularly pronounced in the context of how these elements collectively influence marketing capabilities and, consequently, SME performance (Leogrande et al., 2024; Wang, 2020). Existing research has focused mainly on operational challenges or consumer behaviour, overlooking the complex relationships between digital marketing practices and technology readiness (ER et al., 2022; Udriyah et al., 2023). For instance, while some studies highlight the importance of training and digital literacy in expanding SMEs' market reach, they often fail to establish precise mechanisms by which social media and technology readiness jointly enhance marketing capabilities (Fathin & Indrawati, 2024; Priambodo et al., 2024).

Despite the growing number of studies on social media adoption among SMEs, there is still limited systematic evidence that explicitly explains how technology readiness structurally shapes the development of marketing capabilities. Most existing studies treat technology readiness as a background condition rather than clarifying whether it functions as a prerequisite, a mediating mechanism, or a strategic enabler in translating social media utilisation into enhanced marketing capabilities.

This gap is particularly evident in fashion and tailoring SMEs, where digital adoption dynamics and capability development remain underexplored.

To address this research gap, this systematic literature review (SLR) aims to consolidate empirical findings related to social media utilisation, technology readiness, and the enhancement of marketing capabilities among fashion and tailoring SMEs. The review follows a PRISMA-based protocol, enabling a thorough analysis of the literature across diverse regions and methodological frameworks. Consequently, the primary research

questions of this study seek to explore (1) how fashion and tailoring SMEs utilise social media to bolster marketing activities, (2) the influence of technology readiness on the adoption of digital marketing tools, and (3) how these factors contribute to strengthening marketing capabilities. This research endeavours to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. By illuminating the interconnectedness among social media utilisation, technology readiness, and marketing capability enhancement, the study aims to offer SMEs actionable insights that could guide their strategic approaches in the digital marketing landscape (Baawain et al., 2025; Moreno-Gómez et al., 2023; Puteri & Asy'ari, 2023).

This research aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it advances understanding of digital transformation within small creative enterprises by mapping the interconnections between digital adoption factors and capability development. In practice, it offers insights for SME practitioners, policymakers, and support organisations to design strategies and interventions that promote digital readiness and effective social media use. The scope of this study is limited to peer-reviewed literature published between 2013 and 2024, focusing on fashion and tailoring SMEs within various geographical contexts.

Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesise empirical findings on social media utilisation, technology readiness, and marketing capability enhancement among fashion and tailoring SMEs. The SLR design was selected to ensure transparency, rigour, and replicability in the review process. The methodological procedures were guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, which outlines standardised steps for identifying, selecting, and reporting relevant studies. The qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) employed in the integration of findings follows a rigorous approach to consolidate heterogeneous outcomes across diverse contexts and research methodologies. The methodological framework utilised for data extraction was anchored in a structured matrix that captured critical elements, including authorship, publication year, research design, type of Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SME), studied variables, and significant findings. This structured approach facilitates systematic comparisons and analyses across studies, aligning with best practices delineated by previous research on systematic reviews (Drummond et al., 2020; Hossain et al., 2022).

The thematic analysis revealed three major themes that underpin the intersection of social media, technology readiness, and marketing capabilities. Firstly, the role of social media as a marketing tool was prominently evidenced in the literature. For instance, Tajvidi and Karami (2021) illuminate the influence of social media on firm performance through enhanced marketing capabilities, particularly in branding and innovation processes. Furthermore, studies have shown that the practical usage of social media platforms leads to significant improvements in marketing engagement and customer reach, reinforcing the importance of social media as a strategic marketing tool for SMEs (Drummond et al., 2020; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021).

The methodological rigour of the SLR was validated using a modified Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist, ensuring that only studies meeting predetermined quality thresholds were included in the analysis. This was fundamental in maintaining the review's integrity and ensuring the credibility of the findings, thereby providing impactful insights for both academic scholarship and practical application within the field of SME marketing. This systematic review establishes a grounded theoretical framework for understanding the interconnections between social media marketing, technological readiness, and marketing capability development in SMEs. These insights can inform practitioners and

scholars alike, guiding effective marketing strategies in an increasingly digital and interconnected marketplace.

The literature search was conducted using four major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected due to their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed research in business, marketing, and digital transformation studies. The search strategy applied Boolean operators with keywords such as “social media utilisation”, “technology readiness”, “digital readiness”, “marketing capabilities”, “SMEs”, “fashion”, and “tailoring”. The search was limited to journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 to ensure relevance to contemporary digital transformation contexts.

Result and Discussion

PRISMA Flow of Article Selection

To ensure a rigorous and transparent review process, this study followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. PRISMA provides a structured approach to identifying, screening, and selecting relevant studies, thereby minimising bias and improving the reliability of the review findings. The process began with a comprehensive database search, followed by systematic filtering through title/abstract review, duplicate removal, full-text assessment, and final eligibility checks based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results of each stage are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 PRISMA Flow of Article Selection

Stage	Description	Number of Articles
Identification	Records identified through database searches	1,246
	Duplicates removed	–312
	Records after duplicates removed	934
Screening	Records screened by title and abstract	934
	Records excluded	–776
	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	158
Eligibility	Full-text articles excluded (did not meet criteria)	–117
	Studies meeting the inclusion criteria	41
Included	Studies included in the final qualitative synthesis	41

The PRISMA flow results demonstrate a systematic narrowing of articles from a broad pool to a focused selection of high-relevance studies. The initial search returned 1,246 records, indicating strong scholarly interest in digital adoption, SMEs, social media, and technology readiness. After removing 312 duplicate entries, 934 unique articles were screened. A large number of studies (776) were excluded during title and abstract screening due to misalignment with the core themes of social media utilisation, technology readiness, and marketing capabilities in SMEs or because they focused on unrelated industries. The 158 articles that proceeded to full-text review were examined more closely against strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. This stage led to the exclusion of another 117 studies, primarily due to a lack of empirical data, focus outside fashion/tailoring SMEs, or limited relevance to digital marketing and technology readiness constructs. Ultimately, 41 studies met all criteria and

were included in the final synthesis. This refined selection ensured the review was grounded in high-quality, focused, and methodologically sound literature, enabling credible insights into how social media and technology readiness influence the development of marketing capability among fashion and tailoring SMEs.

Descriptive Analysis of Selected Studies

To better understand the characteristics of the research landscape surrounding social media utilisation, technology readiness, and marketing capabilities among fashion and tailoring SMEs, a descriptive analysis was conducted on the 41 studies included in the final synthesis. This analysis provides an overview of publication patterns, geographical distribution, and methodological approaches. These descriptive insights help contextualise the thematic findings and highlight global research trends, regional focuses, and dominant research designs used in this field. Table 2 summarises the descriptive characteristics of the selected studies.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Selected Studies

Category	Subcategory	Percentage/ Count	Notes
Publication Year Distribution	2013–2015	8% (3 studies)	Early-stage digital adoption research
	2016–2018	17% (7 studies)	Increasing attention to SME digitalisation
	2019–2024	75% (31 studies)	Highest interest due to the COVID-19-driven digital shift
Geographical Distribution	Asia	46% (19 studies)	Indonesia, Malaysia, India, China
	Europe	27% (11 studies)	UK, Spain, Italy
	Africa	17% (7 studies)	Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa
	Others	10% (4 studies)	Australia, South America
Research Methods Used	Quantitative	54% (22 studies)	Mostly surveys on SME owners
	Qualitative	29% (12 studies)	Interviews, case studies
	Mixed-methods	17% (7 studies)	A combination of surveys, interviews, or content analysis

The descriptive analysis reveals essential patterns within the body of literature reviewed. The publication-year distribution shows a notable surge in studies published between 2019 and 2024, accounting for 75% of all selected articles. This increase aligns with the global acceleration of digital transformation prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as SMEs were compelled to adopt online platforms, including social media, to sustain business operations. Geographically, the research is dominated by Asian countries (46%), reflecting the region’s active SME sector and the strong government push toward digitalisation, especially in industries such as fashion, tailoring, and creative crafts. Europe (27%) and Africa (17%) also contribute significantly, indicating growing recognition of digital marketing’s importance across diverse economic contexts. The remaining studies from Australia and South America highlight broader global interest, though to a lesser extent.

Methodologically, quantitative research designs are the most prevalent (54%), primarily using surveys to measure SME owners' perceptions, digital behaviour, and readiness levels. Qualitative studies (29%) provide deeper insights through interviews and case analyses, particularly relevant for understanding fashion and tailoring SMEs' lived experiences with digital tools. Mixed-methods studies (17%) bridge these perspectives by combining numerical data with narrative findings, offering more holistic analyses. The descriptive analysis underscores that scholarly attention to digital transformation in fashion and tailoring SMEs is growing, regionally diverse, and methodologically varied, reflecting the complexity and global relevance of social media and technology readiness in shaping SME marketing capabilities.

Despite the growing volume of research, several structural limitations were identified in the reviewed literature. First, there is a noticeable geographical bias, with a dominance of studies conducted in Asian contexts, while evidence from Europe, Africa, and Latin America remains limited. Second, the literature is heavily dominated by cross-sectional survey-based methods, restricting longitudinal insight into how marketing capabilities evolve over time. Third, few studies explicitly theorise the role of technology readiness, which is often treated as a contextual variable rather than a core explanatory mechanism in marketing capability development.

Key Themes Identified

Following the thematic synthesis of the 41 selected studies, three major themes emerged that illustrate how social media utilisation and technology readiness shape the marketing capabilities of fashion and tailoring SMEs. These themes capture the strategic roles of social media, the readiness factors influencing digital adoption, and the ways digital platforms enhance core marketing functions. Table 3 summarises these key thematic areas and their primary indicators.

Table 3. Key Themes Identified from the Literature

Theme	Key Indicators / Insights	Implications for SMEs
1. Social Media as a Marketing Tool	- Strengthens brand visibility and identity through visual content - Facilitates customer engagement (comments, messages) - Supports product showcasing via photos, videos, influencer content - Enables market intelligence through analytics	Enhances online presence, expands market reach, and supports efficient promotion strategies
2. Technology Readiness and Digital Adoption Barriers	- Technological competence of owners/staff - Adequate digital infrastructure (devices, internet, software) - Managerial willingness to adopt technology Barriers: low digital skills, limited finances, resistance to change	Determines the effectiveness and depth of social media utilisation
3. Enhancement of Marketing Capabilities	- Market sensing capability (trend and competitor monitoring) - Customer relationship management (direct communication) - Product differentiation via	Strengthens competitiveness, improves customer loyalty, and enables agile market

Theme	Key Indicators / Insights	Implications for SMEs
	visual creativity - Strong branding through consistent storytelling	responses

The thematic analysis highlights that social media has become a strategic marketing asset for fashion and tailoring SMEs. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are especially effective due to their visual nature, allowing SMEs to showcase designs, promote branding, and engage customers directly. Visual storytelling, user-generated content, and interactive features help SMEs maintain active customer relationships and gather real-time feedback, supporting both promotion and product development. Technology readiness emerged as a critical enabler of effective digital adoption. SMEs with adequate digital skills, internet connectivity, and supportive leadership demonstrated stronger and more consistent use of social media tools. Conversely, technology readiness barriers, such as low digital literacy, limited financial resources, and reluctance to adopt new systems, restrict SMEs from maximising social media's potential. This suggests that digital transformation requires not only access to platforms but also organisational capability and mindset shifts.

Finally, the evidence shows that social media and technology readiness together enhance key marketing capabilities. SMEs can more accurately sense market trends, differentiate their products through visual content, build stronger customer relationships, and develop cohesive brand identities. These capabilities are essential in the highly competitive fashion and tailoring industry, where creativity and rapid response to trends are vital. SMEs with higher technology readiness show greater strategic depth in social media usage, resulting in improved market reach, stronger branding, and increased customer loyalty. The three themes illustrate that while social media offers powerful tools, the full benefits are realised only when SMEs possess the technological readiness to adopt and integrate these digital strategies into their marketing operations.

Synthesis of Findings

The synthesis of the 41 reviewed studies reveals a consistent and compelling narrative: social media utilisation significantly enhances the marketing capabilities of fashion and tailoring SMEs, but this impact is deeply dependent on the level of technology readiness within the business. When SMEs possess adequate digital skills, supportive infrastructure, and a willingness to adopt new technologies, social media becomes a powerful tool for expanding market reach, strengthening customer relationships, and building distinctive brand identities. The reviewed studies collectively show that businesses with greater digital preparedness achieve superior marketing performance. These SMEs engage customers more effectively, respond to inquiries or trends more rapidly, and maintain stronger online brand visibility. Such agility is increasingly essential in the fashion sector, where rapid trend changes require rapid adaptation and continuous consumer interaction.

Despite these benefits, the synthesis also uncovers significant challenges. Many SMEs struggle with digital skill gaps, making it difficult to manage content, analyse performance data, or engage customers consistently. Inconsistent content strategies, such as irregular posting or low-quality visual materials, limit the effectiveness of social media marketing. Resource constraints, including limited budgets for devices, internet access, or digital tools,

further limit SMEs' ability to leverage social media platforms fully. These constraints suggest that digital transformation in the fashion and tailoring sector cannot be accomplished by individual SMEs alone. Instead, the synthesis highlights the importance of capacity-building initiatives, such as digital literacy training, mentoring programs, and workshops tailored to creative SMEs. Governmental and institutional support is particularly critical in providing financial assistance, technological guidance, and structured training programs that encourage the adoption of digital tools. The findings emphasise that while social media has enormous potential to enhance marketing capabilities, its actual value is unlocked only when SMEs are equipped with the necessary technological readiness and strategic support. Strengthening both elements is key to ensuring that fashion and tailoring SMEs can thrive in the increasingly digital marketplace.

The findings of this systematic literature review reveal that social media utilisation and technology readiness play interconnected roles in shaping the marketing capabilities of fashion and tailoring SMEs. Social media platforms provide dynamic spaces for communication, branding, and customer interaction, while technology readiness determines the extent to which SMEs can effectively exploit these digital opportunities. The thematic synthesis shows that SMEs with higher levels of digital preparedness are better able to adopt, manage, and optimise social media tools for strategic marketing.

Social Media Utilisation and Its Impact on Marketing Capability

The integration of social media into marketing strategies has become a pivotal factor in the growth and sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in sectors such as fashion and tailoring. The transformative nature of social media stems from its accessibility, user-friendly features, and high consumer engagement, which collectively enhance marketing capabilities. The literature identifies three primary areas in which social media significantly impacts SMEs: market sensing, customer relationship management, and branding. Social media platforms provide SMEs with valuable tools for market research and trend analysis. Through analytics and customer feedback, SMEs can effectively monitor preferences, identify emerging trends, and adapt to competitor strategies. This capability is critically supported by findings from Effendi et al., who emphasise that social media helps uncover customer insights crucial to strategic decision-making (Effendi et al., 2020). Furthermore, Amoah and Jibril note that social media as an advertising tool is more effective than traditional methods, enabling firms to maintain real-time awareness of market dynamics and thereby fostering adaptability and responsiveness ((Amoah et al., 2021). Other studies corroborate this perspective, asserting that social media facilitates robust market intelligence, allowing SMEs to observe competitors' strategies and operations effectively (Pellegrino & Abé, 2023), and by leveraging digital tools to enhance marketing responsiveness (Hojnik & Hušek, 2023).

The interactivity inherent in social media fosters stronger relationships between SMEs and their customers. Features such as comments, messaging, and live interactions not only improve customer service but also enhance personalised engagement, as noted by Kwarteng et al. (2021), who highlight the positive impact of Internet-based communication on customer relationship management (Kwarteng et al., 2021). The ability to communicate and respond to customer inquiries swiftly creates opportunities for SMEs to improve customer loyalty and satisfaction (Rahman et al., 2020). Moreover, platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which are

specifically tailored for visual storytelling, enable fashion brands to engage customers innovatively, enhancing the overall customer experience (Soelaiman et al., 2023).

Consistent use of visual content on social media strengthens brand identity and differentiation. According to Patma et al., employing social media marketing techniques significantly enhances SMEs' visibility and brand awareness, crucial components in competitive markets (Patma et al., 2021). Lee et al. also emphasise that SMEs can leverage the communicative nature of social media to build distinctive brand narratives that resonate with consumers, thereby improving overall brand perception and customer loyalty (Lee et al., 2022). The findings from Ghazwani and Alzahrani further highlight that utilising social media for brand promotion is significantly linked to enhanced innovation and brand positioning for SMEs (Ghazwani & Alzahrani, 2023). The interplay of market sensing, customer relationship management, and branding capabilities, facilitated by social media, enhances SMEs' overall marketing capabilities. This collective impact allows businesses to remain agile, creative, and responsive, aligning digital marketing strategies with foundational marketing capabilities essential for success in today's competitive landscape.

The Role of Technology Readiness in Digital Transformation

The concept of technology readiness is crucial for understanding how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) navigate digital transformation, particularly regarding their utilisation of social media tools. A firm's technology readiness, encompassing technological competence, infrastructure capabilities, and managerial support, plays a significant role in determining the extent and effectiveness of social media adoption among SMEs. This framework helps elucidate why some SMEs excel in their digital marketing strategies while others lag. Research indicates that SMEs with strong technological readiness, characterised by adequate infrastructure and a positive managerial attitude, are more inclined to adopt and effectively utilise social media. For example, Teng et al. highlight that digital technologies, including social media, are foundational to the digital transformation of SMEs, suggesting that proactive technology adoption enhances transformative outcomes (Teng et al., 2022). Similarly, Garzoni et al. discuss the importance of digital maturity in influencing how effectively SMEs leverage digital tools (Garzoni et al., 2020). Conversely, challenges such as inadequate digital literacy, financial constraints, and resistance to technological change impede the implementation of digital marketing strategies (Ullah et al., 2023).

Zhou et al. further emphasise this relationship by noting that companies lacking adequate digital capabilities often struggle with digital innovation, which directly affects their competitive edge in markets increasingly influenced by social media marketing techniques (Zhou et al., 2024). It becomes evident that without sufficient technology readiness, the potential benefits of social media are not fully realised. SMEs that invest in technology training and infrastructure demonstrate more advanced marketing practices, such as targeted advertising and effective influencer partnerships. According to Shao et al., leveraging digital tools for data analysis enables more strategic, responsive marketing actions. This allows SMEs to capitalise on consumer insights drawn from social media interactions (Shao et al., 2024). The correlation between technology readiness and advanced marketing practices underscores the necessity for SMEs to cultivate digital skills among their workforce to maximise the capabilities offered by social media (Krajčák et al., 2023). This aligns with insights from Krajčák et al., who emphasise that a higher level of digital literacy helps SMEs

deploy effective digital marketing strategies (Krajčák et al., 2023). Moreover, Ghobakhloo et al. note that fulfilling necessary digital capabilities enhances SMEs' engagement in digital marketing efforts, thereby improving overall performance (Ghobakhloo et al., 2023). Tools that facilitate data-driven content planning are significantly influenced by a company's technological readiness, enabling SMEs to utilise sophisticated analytical techniques to engage their target audiences effectively.

The strategic depth of social media utilisation among SMEs often correlates with their foundational technology readiness. Effendi et al. argue that regulatory support positively influences SMEs' adoption of social media technologies, promoting deeper engagement with these tools (Effendi et al., 2020). This suggests that external factors should align with internal competencies, such as technology readiness, to foster a holistic approach to digital transformation. Technology readiness is a critical enabler of digital transformation for SMEs. It impacts not only the initial adoption of social media tools but also shapes how these platforms can be leveraged effectively for advanced marketing strategies. Without adequate preparation, SMEs risk missing substantial opportunities for growth and market presence in the digital landscape.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of the current review make a crucial contribution to the existing literature on digital transformation and the utilisation of social media among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This research aligns with previous studies that establish a link between social media and enhanced market reach, customer engagement, and brand competitiveness for SMEs. However, it contributes to the discourse by introducing the mediating role of technology readiness, which is often overlooked in prior research. Existing literature acknowledges the importance of social media in promoting SMEs, but few studies delve deeply into the prerequisites for successful digital transformation. For instance, Abbasi et al. highlight how perceived vendor support significantly enhances the intention to adopt social media marketing among Malaysian SMEs (2022). However, they do not explicitly discuss how foundational technological readiness, a combination of skills, infrastructure, and managerial mindset, must accompany this adoption to yield beneficial outcomes. This study underscores the significance of technology readiness in shaping not only the willingness to adopt social media but also the extent and depth of its strategic use. These findings align with those of Lukitaningsih et al., who demonstrate that social media marketing positively impacts the financial performance of Indonesian SMEs (Lukitaningsih et al., 2024).

In contrast, the previously mentioned studies often present digital adoption as an autonomous process, neglecting the competencies required for SMEs to engage meaningfully with social media tools. For example, although Jafari-Sadeghi et al. explore the dynamics of technology entrepreneurship, they do not specifically focus on the role of technology readiness as a facilitating factor for adopting social media in SMEs (Jafari-Sadeghi et al., 2021). This review posits that for SMEs to unlock the full potential of social media, a baseline level of technology readiness must be established. As Schnitzler and Bohnet-Joschko (2025) found, technology readiness drives digital adoption across sectors (Schnitzler & Bohnet-Joschko, 2025). The current study parallels this by indicating that the absence of critical technological infrastructure and expertise can lead to underutilisation of social media tools, thereby inhibiting the growth and competitive edge of SMEs.

Previous studies, such as those by Patma et al., support similar findings, indicating that effective social media marketing can lead to sustainable business practices among SMEs (Patma et al., 2021). However, these studies often remain surface-level, necessitating a deeper examination of the components of technology readiness that can facilitate these outcomes. This review reinforces the established relationship between social media and SME performance while extending the discourse by articulating the significance of technology readiness as a vital mediating factor. Unlike prior studies, it underscores the necessity for SMEs to cultivate the essential skills, infrastructure, and managerial mindset required to engage effectively with digital marketing tools. By doing so, this study adds clarity to existing knowledge of the interplay among digital readiness, technology adoption, and digital marketing practices across various SME contexts.

Implications for Fashion and Tailoring SMEs

The synthesis shows that fashion and tailoring SMEs stand to gain a significant competitive advantage from strategic social media use. The visual nature of fashion products aligns naturally with social media formats that emphasise imagery and video-based content. SMEs that integrate social media with business processes, such as customer service, product development, and brand identity, enhance their market adaptability and customer engagement. However, the benefits are unevenly distributed, with smaller or traditional tailoring businesses often lagging due to low technology readiness. This gap highlights the need for supportive ecosystems, including training programs, digital literacy workshops, and financial incentives to encourage adoption of digital tools.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review demonstrates that social media utilisation and technology readiness are mutually reinforcing drivers of marketing capability enhancement among fashion and tailoring SMEs. Social media platforms offer accessible, visually oriented, and interactive tools that support key marketing functions, including market sensing, customer engagement, and brand building. However, the extent to which SMEs can capitalise on these opportunities depends mainly on their level of technology readiness, encompassing digital skills, infrastructure availability, and managerial willingness to adopt new technologies.

The findings show that SMEs with higher levels of digital preparedness are better equipped to integrate social media into their business processes, thereby improving marketing adaptability, strengthening customer relationships, and enhancing brand differentiation. Conversely, skill gaps, resource limitations, and resistance to digital change continue to hinder many traditional or micro-scale tailoring businesses. These barriers indicate the need for greater support structures, such as digital training programs, government incentives, and industry partnerships, to help SMEs transition into more digitally empowered business models. From a theoretical perspective, this review contributes to the understanding of digital transformation in creative industries by mapping how technology readiness underpins effective digital marketing practices.

This study is subject to several limitations. The review relies exclusively on secondary data and is constrained by the dominance of cross-sectional studies within the existing literature, limiting causal and longitudinal interpretations. Additionally, variations in SME

contexts and measurement approaches across studies may affect the generalisability of the findings.

Practically, the study offers actionable insights for SME owners, policymakers, and support organisations seeking to strengthen competitiveness in the fashion and tailoring sector.

Future research should explore comparative studies across creative sectors, adopt mixed-methods approaches to capture deeper behavioural insights, and investigate the long-term effects of digital capability-building initiatives. Strengthening the digital ecosystem for SMEs is essential to ensuring equitable access to the benefits of social media and emerging technologies, ultimately supporting sustainable growth in the creative economy.

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Conflict Of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest in the preparation of this work.

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