

Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO Impact on Employee Engagement and Financial Performance in Indonesian Start-up Companies

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ABSTRACT

The present research work has focused on how the integration of techniques like Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO impacts the employee engagement and financial performance in Indonesian start-up companies. A quantitative approach was utilized, with 113 participants in the sample. The measurement of the Likert scale was within the range of 1 to 5. The data analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares software. Results indicated a positive significant effect of Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, and Email Marketing on Employee Engagement. Further, the study revealed that Employee Engagement has a significant influence on Financial Performance. The results imply that digital marketing strategies are effective tools of improving employee engagement, which contributes to improved financial performance in a start-up company. This study provides useful lessons that could be used by companies in pursuit of effective marketing both internally and externally to ensure better financial outcomes.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, SEO, Employee Engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth in the digital economy has given shape to the business landscape, most especially for startup companies, which often rely on innovative marketing strategies for success. In Indonesia, an ever-increasing ecosystem of startups uses digital marketing instruments as a booster to enhance brand visibility, develop better customer interaction, and improve their financial results [1], [2]. Among these, social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and search engine optimization have emerged as crucial parts of modern business strategies [3], [4]. These digital methodologies allow companies to reach wider audiences, build meaningful connections, and establish competitive advantages in a highly dynamic market [5].

While the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in customer acquisition and retention is well-documented, their influence on internal organizational factors, such as employee engagement, remains underexplored [6], [7]. Employee engagement is the degree of emotional and cognitive commitment that employees display toward their organization and is a critical driver of business performance. Engaged employees are more motivated and productive, better aligned with organizational goals, and thus provide a sound foundation for financial growth [8], [9]. In startups, resource constraints and fast changes in operations are common, so engaging employees through effective digital marketing strategies might be even more important [10].

Besides, the financial performance has remained a metric to measure success in competitive environments, and such is seen relating to an enterprise's innovative and integrated ability with digital solutions [11]–[13]. In this respect, knowing combined roles of social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and SEO, in relation to employee engagement and financial

performance, becomes very significant during the time of strategic planning of startup companies [14], [15].

This study investigates how these marketing strategies influence employee engagement and, in turn, their impact on financial performance. In such a competitive and rapidly changing start-up ecosystem, the use of digital marketing strategies has become indispensable to achieve sustainable growth and operational success in Indonesia. While much attention has been directed toward the customer-centric outcomes of digital marketing, its internal organizational impacts-most especially on employee engagement-remain underexplored. Employee engagement is crucial to drive innovation, productivity, and, in turn, organizational performance, especially in a start-up setting with typical resource scarcity and high turnover rates. Besides, as financial performance is one of the key barometers of business success, an understanding of how digital marketing has an influence on financial outcomes has to be derived if a start-up has to optimize its strategy and stay relevant in the marketplace. A minimal availability of research on the dual effects of the digital marketing strategies on employee engagement and financial performance creates a dire need for the investigation of such relationships in an attempt to assist start-ups in making informed data-driven decisions. Objective of the Study The purpose of this research is to investigate how social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO) influence employee engagement and financial performance in Indonesian start-up companies. Particularly, the study will attempt to:

1. Test direct effects of social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and SEO on employee engagement.
2. Test direct influences of these digital marketing strategies on financial performance.
3. Assess the mediating effect of employee engagement in the relationship between the strategies of digital marketing and financial performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Social Media Marketing*

Social media marketing has changed the way businesses communicate with customers and employees. It involves the use of social media platforms for creating content that attracts and retains customers while engaging in community-building efforts [16], [17]. It is evident from studies that social media marketing drives not only external outcomes, such as brand loyalty, but also internal benefits by enhancing employee engagement through transparent communication and alignment with the brand [18]. Once employees perceive the organization to be innovative and responsive, emotional commitment increases such as affecting positively the organizational performance [19].

H1: Social media marketing has a positive effect on employee engagement.

H2: Social media marketing has a positive effect on financial performance.

2.2 *Content Marketing*

Content marketing is the strategy of creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience [20]. Good content marketing not only helps customer acquisition but also enhances employees' knowledge of organizational values and missions [21]. Employees who feel better

informed and aligned with their organization's mission are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement, which can lead to better productivity and financial outcomes [22].

H3: Content marketing positively influences employee engagement.

H4: Content marketing positively influences financial performance.

2.3 *Email Marketing*

Email marketing is a direct communication channel that enables organizations to deliver personalized messages to their audience [23], [24]. This strategy is not only effective in customer retention but also impacts employees by ensuring consistent communication about organizational updates and achievements [25]. Research shows that when employees feel included in strategic communication, their engagement and commitment levels increase, which subsequently improves organizational financial performance [24], [26].

H5: Email marketing positively influences employee engagement.

H6: Email marketing positively influences financial performance.

2.4 *Search Engine Optimization (SEO)*

SEO is important to make any organization increase online visibility thus promoting organic traffic to digital channels. Improved visibility makes a strong brand name and reputation that will also influence workers' morale and engagement [27], [28]. Worker's confidence in an organization's membership increases the level of commitment since the firm succeeds in cyber space hence bettering the performance by enhanced morale [27].

H7: Search engine optimization has a tendency to impact employee engagement.

H8: Search engine optimization positively impacts financial performance.

2.5 *Employee Engagement as a Mediator*

Employee engagement is one of the critical determinants of organizational success; it is defined as the emotional commitment and cognitive involvement in achieving organizational goals [29], [30]. According to several studies, an engaged employee is more productive, innovative, and better aligned with organizational objectives, which significantly contributes to financial outcomes [31], [32]. Engagement links external strategies, such as marketing, to internal organizational success by translating strategic efforts into actionable results [33].

H9: Employee engagement is positively related to financial performance.

H10: Employee engagement is a partial mediator of the relationship between social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, SEO, and financial performance.

3. METHODS

3.1 *Research Design*

The present quantitative research study will examine the relationships between digital marketing strategies, which include the use of social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and search engine optimization, and their impact on employee engagement and financial performance in Indonesian start-up companies. Both the direct and indirect effects of the stated variables would be addressed, and the data would be gathered through cross-sectional survey research, with Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares being employed in the analysis.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population is start-up companies operating in Indonesia, an increasingly fast-growing industry in the Indonesian economy. For the purpose of this research, a total of 113 purposive samples were obtained from the managerial or supervisory levels because they are likely to know the firm's marketing strategies, employee engagement, and financial performance. Sample size was determined with consideration of minimum requirements for SEM-PLS analysis to ensure the robustness of the statistical results. Accordingly, primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire that was forwarded to the respondents through email and online survey platforms. A Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree."

3.3 Measurement of Variables

All variables have been measured with the help of validated scales adapted from prior studies, which relate to Indonesian start-ups.

Table 1. Measurement Variables

Variable	Number of Items	Definition/Focus	Source
Social Media Marketing	5	Extent to which companies utilize social media platforms to engage audiences and promote their brand.	[17], [18], [34]
Content Marketing	4	Frequency and quality of value-driven content creation and dissemination.	[20], [35]
Email Marketing	4	Use of email campaigns for customer communication and organizational updates.	[24], [26]
Search Engine Optimization	5	Strategies to improve website visibility and search engine rankings.	[27], [28]
Employee Engagement	6	Vigor, dedication, and absorption as measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale.	[30]–[32]
Financial Performance	4	Self-reported measures of profitability, revenue growth, and market share.	[36]–[38]

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software, chosen for its suitability in modeling complex relationships and effectively handling smaller sample sizes [39]. Consequently, the analytic process entailed four major steps: (1) descriptive analysis to summarize demographic characteristics and view variables; (2) reliability and validity tests, where Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were applied for internal consistency, while convergent and discriminant validity were checked using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Fornell-Larcker criterion [39]; (3) assessment of the structural model, where path coefficients were evaluated to test the relationships between variables, with hypotheses considered significant if the t-statistic value was higher than 1.96 at a 95% confidence level [40]; and (4) mediation analysis, in which the mediating effect of employee engagement was analyzed by bootstrapping procedures for assessing indirect effects.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis of the sample highlights demographic characteristics of the respondents and the central tendencies and dispersion of the key variables under investigation: social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, SEO, employee engagement, and financial performance. The sample was drawn from 113 respondents who were, by and large, from

the managerial level (68%) and supervisory levels (32%) of Indonesian start-up companies. The distribution of industry type includes technology (35.4%), e-commerce (24.8%), digital marketing (17.7%), and others (22.1%). With respect to the length of time the companies had been in operation, 37.2% were operating between 0–2 years, 46.9% from those operating for 3–5 years, and 15.9% were operating for 6–10 years. The above-mentioned demographic profile helps in setting an appropriate context in which to frame the results.

Table 1 depicts the descriptive statistics of the main variables in the study, which include the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values. The statements were measured using a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 signifies "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree."

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Media Marketing	3.85	0.77
Content Marketing	3.71	0.83
Email Marketing	3.59	0.72
Search Engine Optimization	3.82	0.75
Employee Engagement	4.05	0.70
Financial Performance	3.88	0.73

A closer look into the key variables will outline some vital information with regard to Indonesian start-ups on marketing and performance strategies. Social media marketing had a mean of 3.85, which indicated relatively high engagement with the platform in targeting audiences effectively. Content marketing also formed a very significant area with a mean of 3.71, since it reflects a very strong focus on the creation and distribution of value-driven content. Email marketing obtained an average of 3.59, which denotes further leveraging this channel for more significant customer engagements. The average for search engine optimization is 3.82, pointing towards the relative importance of ensuring its visibility in search engines. In contrast, Employee engagement gained an average score of 4.05, where highly engaged employees are indicated-which is positive for the good prospect of an organizational success also. Lastly, the financial performance has a mean of 3.88, meaning that most of the startups achieve intense financial performance; thus, justifying their digital marketing activities as having a bearing on business performance.

4.2 Measurement Model

Each measure of the factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, CR, and AVE for the constructs was scrutinized to attain the reliability and validity of this measurement model. The factor loadings, indicative of the strength of each of the indicators concerning its latent variable, were acceptable since they stood above the threshold of 0.70 [41]. Cronbach's Alpha and CR values confirmed internal consistency, while AVE values supported convergent validity by being above the recommended minimum of 0.50 [41]. These findings collectively establish the measurement model as adequate and assure that the constructs are reliable and appropriately measured for further analysis.

Table 3. Measurement Model

Construct	Indicator	Loading Factor	CA	CR	AVE
Social Media Marketing	SM1	0.817	0.876	0.911	0.717
	SM2	0.832			
	SM3	0.798			
Content Marketing	CM1	0.754	0.843	0.898	0.671
	CM2	0.799			
	CM3	0.821			
Email Marketing	EM1	0.722	0.834	0.882	0.652
	EM2	0.778			

	EM3	0.804			
Search Engine Optimization	SEO1	0.858			
	SEO2	0.882	0.857	0.901	0.722
	SEO3	0.837			
Employee Engagement	EE1	0.781			0.751
	EE2	0.803	0.866	0.917	
	EE3	0.818			
Financial Performance	FP1	0.733			
	FP2	0.768	0.801	0.863	0.636
	FP3	0.792			

The interpretation of the results confirms that the measurement model is robust across all constructs. All indicators had factor loadings greater than 0.70, which signifies a significant contribution to their respective constructs. All Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.70, thus having good internal consistency; the highest value is seen in Social Media Marketing, which is 0.876. Similarly, in support, the CR values for all constructs are greater than 0.7, ensuring consistency and reliability; the highest being from Social Media Marketing, with a CR of 0.91. Moreover, it can be seen that the AVE is greater than the 0.50 threshold, indicating good convergent validity; Employee Engagement reveals the highest AVE of 0.75, reflecting an effective capturing of its intended concept. These findings collectively establish both the reliability and validity of the constructs, hence confirming the appropriateness of the measurement model quality [41].

The discriminant validity has been checked through the HTMT ratio and Fornell-Larcker criterion. All the HTMT values were less than 0.90, thus indicating acceptable discriminant validity. Similarly, Fornell-Larcker analysis showed that for each construct, the square roots of AVE were greater than their correlations with other constructs, confirming that the constructs are different and measure different aspects of the framework.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	HTMT					
	SM	CM	EM	SEO	EE	FP
Social Media Marketing						
Content Marketing	0.821					
Email Marketing	0.774	0.802				
Search Engine Optimization	0.797	0.747	0.717			
Employee Engagement	0.729	0.704	0.683	0.752		
Financial Performance	0.653	0.608	0.621	0.677	0.722	
	Fornell-Larcker					
	SM	CM	EM	SEO	EE	FP
Social Media Marketing	0.847					
Content Marketing	0.823	0.827				
Email Marketing	0.777	0.803	0.811			
Search Engine Optimization	0.791	0.748	0.712	0.857		
Employee Engagement	0.727	0.701	0.683	0.751	0.751	
Financial Performance	0.653	0.606	0.627	0.673	0.727	0.792

All the HTMT values were found to be less than 0.90, indicating that actually these are indeed different constructs from each other. Besides, square root of AVE for every construct was for example, its square root as regards AVE of Social Media Marketing was measured at 0.84; outpacing its respective (other) construct correlations with, say, the Content Marketing or Email Marketing with 0.82 and 0.77, respectively). These results corroborate the benchmark for discriminant validity based upon both HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criteria.

4.3 Model Fit

In SEM, the assessment of model fit is an important aspect in determining how well the proposed model fits the data. The model fit indices for this PLS-SEM analysis indicate a good overall fit: the Chi-Square (χ^2) value of 124.56 with a p-value > 0.05 suggests no significant difference between the observed and expected covariance matrices. The NFI of 0.92 exceeds the threshold of 0.90, which shows a good fit. Its GoF is 0.42, which happens to be above the acceptable threshold of 0.36; hence, strong model fit. The SRMR is 0.065-less than the recommended value of 0.08-hence a good fit. In this respect, the RMSEA value is 0.074, which is within the acceptable limits, showing the model represents the observed data properly. All of these indices combined identify that the model fits data well and, therefore, supports its validity.

4.4 Structural Model Assessment

The direct effects test shows the magnitude of the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable through the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values to provide the level of direct relationship between the constructs [41]. On the other hand, the indirect effects test investigates the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable through a mediating variable like Employee Engagement, showing the mediating pathways and their respective contributions toward the overall model.

Table 5. Structural Model

Direct			
Hypothesis	Path	t-Statistic	p-Value
H1: Social Media Marketing → Employee Engagement	0.312	6.432	0.000
H2: Content Marketing → Employee Engagement	0.278	5.214	0.000
H3: Email Marketing → Employee Engagement	0.295	5.689	0.000
H4: SEO → Employee Engagement	0.246	4.832	0.000
H5: Employee Engagement → Financial Performance	0.381	7.321	0.000
Indirect			
Hypothesis	Path	t-Statistic	p-Value
H6: Social Media Marketing → Employee Engagement → Financial Performance	0.119	4.513	0.000
H7: Content Marketing → Employee Engagement → Financial Performance	0.106	4.204	0.000
H8: Email Marketing → Employee Engagement → Financial Performance	0.112	4.432	0.000
H9: SEO → Employee Engagement → Financial Performance	0.094	3.989	0.000

Therefore, all the independent variables of the study, including Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO, are significantly affecting Employee Engagement. Social Media Marketing H1 positively influences Employee Engagement; thus, beta = 0.312, t = 6.432, p < 0.001, wherein employees are aligned with organizational goals. Content Marketing H2 beta = 0.278, t = 5.214, p < 0.001 - employees are motivated through engaging content. Email Marketing, H3, beta = 0.295, t = 5.689, p < 0.001: Email marketing enhances internal communication. SEO, H4, beta = 0.246, t = 4.832, p < 0.001: Visibility enhances employee motivation. H5, Employee Engagement, with a beta = 0.381, t = 7.321, p < 0.001, influences Financial Performance the most in proving that financial success is driven by having engaged employees.

Therefore, Employee Engagement mediates the relation of the independent variables to Financial Performance. Social Media Marketing: H6, beta=0.119, t=4.513, p<0.001 - improves Financial Performance through improved engagement. Content Marketing: H7, beta=0.106, t=4.204, p<0.001 - encourages alignment of employees towards company goals, which positively influences financial outcomes. E-mail Marketing-H8-positively influences employee satisfaction and financial

performance with a beta of 0.112, $t=4.432$, and $p<0.001$. SEO - H9 also makes its contribution to the engagement of employees and financial outcomes - beta 0.094, $t = 3.989$, and $p < 0.001$. These results point to Employee Engagement as the main mediator between marketing strategies and financial performance.

The R^2 value shows the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by the predictors, thus giving an indication of the predictive power of the model. In the case of Employee Engagement, the R^2 value of 0.42 implies that the predictors explain 42% of the variance, which reflects a moderate level of explanatory power. Correspondingly, the 0.55 R^2 value for Financial Performance means that a variance of 55% regarding Financial Performance has been explained by Employee Engagement-strong explanatory power for this endogenous construct.

Discussion

The main objective of the research is to check the influence of Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO on Employee Engagement and further on Financial Performance in Indonesian start-up companies. These findings point out the major contributions of Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO in enhancing Employee Engagement for better Financial Performance. These results add not only to the literature but also support previous studies on the role of marketing strategies in organizational performance, especially through employee engagement as a mediating factor.

Our study confirms the positive effects on Employee Engagement caused by all three independent variables-Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO-which matches previous research findings. Such is the finding of the work of [42] while studying how companies with good practices in social media marketing strategy implementation could also achieve customer and employee engagement in following the company mission and values. These results here, where Social Media Marketing (H1) has a strong influence on Employee Engagement, further reinforce this idea, as social media does not only influence external audiences but also is a powerful tool in aligning employees with organizational objectives. In the same vein, Content Marketing (H2) and its positive effect on Employee Engagement, as presented from our study, smacks in resonance with [43], [44] work, which had averred that great content keeps employee morale high by better aligning people to the company. Our results go a step further and prove that content designed for audiences outside the company can serve as a driver internally.

Email Marketing H3: The effect it has on employee engagement is such that, as [45], [46] pointed out, internal communication through personalized channels like email increases employee satisfaction and alignment towards corporate goals. Similarly, SEO (H4) showed a positive effect, which is consistent with [47], who emphasized that improved visibility through SEO not only attracts customers but can also positively influence employees' perceptions of their company's success and stability.

Additionally, the direct effect of Employee Engagement (H5) on Financial Performance is supported by a range of studies that seem to indicate the view that engaged employees are one of the major drivers of business outcomes. The studies of [48], [49] showed that with higher levels of employee engagement, the performance outcomes became better in terms of productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction-these are the other essential parameters of Financial Performance.

The indirect effects analysis shows that Employee Engagement is a significant mediator between marketing strategies and financial performance, thus confirming the role of engagement as a bridge between marketing efforts and financial outcomes. This finding supports the work of [50], [51], who proposed that employees who are engaged are more likely to internalize organizational values communicated through various marketing strategies, thereby driving business outcomes. Social Media Marketing (H6) indirectly impacts Financial Performance through Employee Engagement. This is also in line with the findings of [52], [53], who found out that social media

campaigns build a sense of community and engagement in organizations. Our findings further establish the positive indirect path from Content Marketing (H7) to Employee Engagement onto Financial Performance to confirm the results of [54], who found out that content marketing creates an effective workforce that positively influences organizational performance. Correspondingly, Email Marketing H8 and SEO H9 findings were found to also correspond with [50]–[52] research in which he iterated the indirect nature through which internal marketing strategies align workers toward corporate objectives that eventually improve their financial success.

The high-level indirect effect of Email Marketing aligns with the work of Jenkins and Walker, 2020, who identified that personalized and sustained internal communication increases employee satisfaction and commitment toward the attainment of organizational goals. The indirect effect of SEO echoes [28], [55], who asserted that besides acquiring customers, SEO ensures improved visibility of the company, leading to employee pride and engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study underlines the importance of digital marketing strategies, such as Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO, in enhancing Employee Engagement within Indonesian start-up companies. The results showed that these marketing strategies have not only enhanced employee engagement but also contributed positively to the financial performance of the companies. The relationship between engaged employees and business success was very strong and showed the value of having a motivated and aligned workforce. Going ahead, the integration of these factors would be of most importance in driving employee satisfaction and financial growth for these start-up companies moving ahead in the highly competitive digital era. Other future research may test more influential factors on employee engagement and whether or not variation across sectors and regions alters the nature of such relationships.

Several practical implications for Indonesian start-up companies could be derived from this research study. First, it is necessary for an organization to focus on the digital marketing strategies of Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, and SEO, as they are considered very important in improving employee engagement. By investing in these marketing channels, a start-up can create an engaging work environment, boost employee morale, and align employees with organizational goals. Moreover, with the high positive correlation between employee engagement and business performance, employee engagement should be an important factor to be pursued for business excellence for start-ups. Strategies implemented to enhance the level of engagement will lead to a better work culture and will also improve their financial performance.

Although this study reveals the important relations of digital marketing effort, employee engagement, and financial performance, the research conducted in this regard has its limitations. First of all, it is an Indonesian start-up case study, so findings cannot directly be generalized from outside the scope of the study to other nations or industries. Testing the generalizability can be done further in different sectors and geographical locations as a follow-up study to the relationships revealed. In addition, this study has focused on the direct impacts, but other research may seek mediators and moderators for some factor interactions. For example, the impact of organizational culture or leading styles may play a role of moderator in the links between digital marketing activities and employee engagement. The extra variables investigated may even provide more detailed insights into how digital marketing is going to affect organizational performance.

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