

Authentic TikTok Storytelling Builds Personal Brands for Indonesian Food and Beverage SMEs

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Personal Brands

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ABSTRACT

The rise of TikTok as a platform for authentic, engaging content has transformed digital marketing, particularly for small and medium enterprises in Indonesia's food and beverage sector. This study explores how these business owners use TikTok to establish themselves as micro-celebrities, fostering audience connections through fun, relatable content. The research aims to understand how storytelling and platform features enhance brand awareness and loyalty. Using an ethnographic approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with four food and beverage business owners and visual observations of their TikTok videos, focusing on accounts with significant followings. The findings reveal that authentic narratives, such as daily business activities or personal struggles, create emotional bonds with audiences, driving engagement through comments, shares, and live interactions. Unlike other platforms prioritizing aesthetics, TikTok's emphasis on raw content empowers these owners to build personal brands cost-effectively. However, the small sample limits generalizability to other sectors. This study concludes that TikTok offers a powerful, accessible marketing tool for small businesses, enabling owners to become relatable figures who connect with audiences, ultimately enhancing brand visibility and customer loyalty in Indonesia's competitive market.

Keywords: Authenticity, Marketing, Micro-Celebrities, SMEs, Storytelling, TikTok.

ABSTRAK

Kebangkitan TikTok sebagai platform konten autentik dan menarik telah mengubah pemasaran digital, terutama bagi usaha kecil dan menengah di sektor makanan dan minuman Indonesia. Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana para pemilik bisnis ini menggunakan TikTok untuk membangun diri mereka sebagai selebritas mikro, membina koneksi audiens melalui konten yang menyenangkan dan relevan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana penceritaan dan fitur platform meningkatkan kesadaran dan loyalitas merek. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnografi, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan empat pemilik bisnis makanan dan minuman dan pengamatan visual video TikTok mereka, dengan fokus pada akun-akun dengan pengikut yang signifikan. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa narasi autentik, seperti aktivitas bisnis sehari-hari atau perjuangan pribadi, menciptakan ikatan emosional dengan audiens, mendorong keterlibatan melalui komentar, berbagi, dan interaksi langsung. Tidak seperti platform lain yang memprioritaskan estetika, penekanan TikTok pada konten mentah memberdayakan para pemilik ini untuk membangun merek pribadi dengan biaya efektif. Namun, sampel kecil membatasi generalisasi ke sektor lain. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa TikTok menawarkan alat pemasaran

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yang ampuh dan mudah diakses bagi usaha kecil, yang memungkinkan pemiliknya menjadi figur yang relevan dan terhubung dengan audiens, yang pada akhirnya meningkatkan visibilitas merek dan loyalitas pelanggan di pasar Indonesia yang kompetitif.

Kata kunci: *Keaslian, Pemasaran, Selebriti Mikro, UKM, Bercerita, TikTok.*

INTRODUCTION

As a new media platform, TikTok has transformed audience behavior in content production and consumption, driven by a unique digital culture. Launched globally in August 2018, TikTok has expanded to approximately 150 countries, amassing over 1 billion monthly active users, including around 150 million from the United States alone (Figliola, 2023). In 2024, Indonesia emerged as the largest TikTok market worldwide, with nearly 157.6 million users, surpassing countries like the United States and Russia (CNN Indonesia, 2024). This rapid growth is fueled by TikTok's short-form video format, ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes, which captivates users through its accessibility and creative potential, distinguishing it from platforms like Instagram and YouTube (Balogun-Ibijunle et al., 2024). The platform's ability to foster authentic, engaging content has reshaped marketing strategies, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia's food and beverage (F&B) sector.

TikTok's appeal lies in its capacity to create a new digital culture through interactive content. According to Lin (2023), the platform's attributes, such as diverse video genres, engaging content, user-friendly interfaces, and visual effects, align with user needs for observational learning, joy, and emotional relief. These features facilitate personal values like achievement, pleasure, and warm relationships, making TikTok a powerful tool for SMEs to connect with audiences. Research by Croes and Bartels (2021) identifies six popular content patterns on TikTok, such as information sharing, new trends, relaxing entertainment, friendship, habitual pastime, and information seeking, that resonate with younger audiences and influence consumption behaviors. For SMEs, this shift offers opportunities to leverage fun, authentic content to build brand identity, yet the potential of personal branding through TikTok's unique features remains underexplored (Broad, 2016; Cheng et al., 2023). For instance, Agustian et al. (2023) highlight how SMEs utilize TikTok Live and influencer collaborations, but their focus is limited to specific features rather than a holistic personal branding strategy. Similarly, Kee et al. (2022) emphasize TikTok's interactivity and cost-effectiveness for SMEs but overlook how individual owners can position themselves as brands through storytelling.

The concept of personal branding, introduced by Peters (1997), posits that individuals can market themselves as brands, a notion particularly relevant for SME owners. Unlike traditional celebrities, micro-celebrities on TikTok, as ordinary individuals, cultivate followings through authentic, relatable content, blurring the lines between personal and professional identities (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Raun, 2018). This study identifies a research gap: while existing studies, such as those by Zulli and Zulli (2022), explore TikTok's memetic culture and influencer dynamics, few examine how SME owners in Indonesia use TikTok's storytelling and fun content to establish themselves as human brands. This gap is significant, as SMEs often lack resources for conventional marketing, making TikTok's low-cost, high-engagement platform ideal for personal branding. Content trends like "Get Ready With Me" (GRWM) or "POV: First Day of Selling" demonstrate how SME owners engage audiences with daily activities, fostering emotional connections that drive sales (Zulli & Zulli, 2022).

This study aims to explore how F&B SME owners in Indonesia leverage TikTok's fun, authentic content to build personal brands and enhance marketing outcomes. By examining the micro-celebrity phenomenon, it seeks to understand how storytelling and platform-specific features create audience intimacy and loyalty, ultimately impacting brand awareness and sales. Through an ethnographic approach, this research captures the

lived experiences of SME owners, offering insights into the future of digital marketing for small-scale businesses in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TikTok as a Marketing Tool for SMEs

According to Zhang et al. (2023), TikTok's short-form video format and algorithmic structure make it a powerful marketing tool for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly in Indonesia's food and beverage (F&B) sector. Unlike platforms like Instagram and YouTube, which prioritize polished aesthetics, TikTok emphasizes authentic, relatable content that fosters emotional connections with audiences (Zhang et al., 2023). Its algorithm, driven by user interactions like likes, shares, and comments, enables content to reach beyond traditional networks, amplifying visibility for resource-constrained SMEs (Zulli & Zulli, 2022). This accessibility allows SME owners to engage directly with consumers, enhancing brand loyalty through personal storytelling. Zulli and Zulli (2022) suggest that TikTok's design supports deeper emotional bonds, as users respond to raw, unfiltered content that reflects everyday experiences (Lin, 2023). For instance, SMEs can leverage trends like "Get Ready with Me" videos to showcase their business processes, creating intimacy with audiences. However, research by Sitorus et al. (2024) notes that while TikTok's interactivity boosts consumer attitudes toward advertisements, its effectiveness for SMEs depends on consistent engagement and content authenticity. This dynamic positions TikTok as a transformative platform for SMEs seeking cost-effective marketing solutions in competitive digital markets.

TikTok's unique features, such as its "For You" page and short video duration, differentiate it from other platforms. These features enable SMEs to reach diverse audiences without relying on expensive advertising, unlike Instagram, which often requires aesthetic investments (Apaolaza et al., 2020). Chen et al. (2021) highlights that digital transformation through platforms like TikTok helps SMEs overcome resource limitations, improving their competitive advantage. By focusing on authentic content, SMEs can build trust and loyalty, crucial for long-term success in Indonesia's dynamic F&B market. This shift underscores TikTok's role in redefining marketing strategies for small-scale businesses.

Micro-Celebrity Phenomenon in SMEs

According to Senft (2013), the micro-celebrity phenomenon describes individuals who cultivate an online presence through authentic self-presentation, a strategy increasingly adopted by SME owners on TikTok. These micro-celebrities blend personal and business personas, using storytelling to create emotional ties with audiences (Khamis et al., 2017). Unlike traditional celebrities, micro-celebrities are relatable figures who gain followings by sharing personal narratives, such as business challenges or daily routines, fostering a sense of intimacy (Lampel & Bhalla, 2007; Marshall & Redmond, 2015; Marcoux, 2017; Marwick, 2015; Lies, 2021; Ling et al., 2022). In the context of SMEs, this phenomenon allows owners to humanize their brands, enhancing audience engagement and loyalty. For example, F&B entrepreneurs on TikTok share behind-the-scenes content, like preparing food or interacting with customers, which resonates with viewers seeking authenticity (Barta & Andalibi, 2021). This approach contrasts with mainstream media's focus on polished personas, making micro-celebrities more accessible.

The emotional labor of micro-celebrities, as noted by Baym (2018), involves managing personal stories to maintain audience connections. This labor is critical for SMEs, where owners often lack resources for conventional marketing. By presenting themselves as "ordinary" entrepreneurs, they build trust and relatability, key drivers of brand attachment (Wang, 2024). Research by Jerslev (2016) suggests that micro-celebrities' success lies in their ability to create an illusion of two-way relationships through consistent, authentic interactions. For Indonesian SMEs, this strategy transforms owners into brand ambassadors, leveraging TikTok's platform to drive sales and community

engagement. The micro-celebrity phenomenon thus offers a scalable model for SMEs to compete in digital markets.

Personal Branding and Storytelling in Digital Marketing

According to Peters (1997), personal branding involves individuals marketing themselves as brands, a concept increasingly vital for SME owners in the digital age. This approach, rooted in Longhofer and Winchester's (2016) theory of self-presentation, allows entrepreneurs to craft unique identities through storytelling on platforms like TikTok (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016). Aaker (1996) identifies personal branding as encompassing product, organization, person, and symbol, with the "person" dimension emphasizing individual authenticity and personality. For SMEs, personal branding on TikTok involves sharing genuine stories, such as business struggles or successes, to differentiate from competitors. This process mirrors corporate branding but is tailored to individual narratives, making it accessible for small-scale entrepreneurs (Gujarathi & Kulkarni, 2018). TikTok's vertical video format and intimate storytelling style amplify this effect, enabling owners to connect emotionally with audiences.

Storytelling on TikTok, as explored by Duguay (2019), fosters authenticity by prioritizing unfiltered, personal content over aesthetic perfection. SME owners use daily activities, like cooking or shop operations, to build relatable brand identities, enhancing audience trust (Chen, 2013). Thomson (2006) notes that strong audience attachments to human brands stem from emotional resonance, a key factor in TikTok's success for SMEs. Unlike Instagram's focus on curated visuals, TikTok's platform encourages raw narratives, aligning with the needs of resource-limited businesses. By integrating personal branding with storytelling, SME owners can create lasting impressions, driving both digital engagement and offline sales.

The Role of Fun and Entertaining Content

According to Blumler and Katz (1974), the uses and gratifications theory explains why users engage with media, with TikTok fulfilling needs like entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity. TikTok's success lies in its ability to deliver fun, engaging content through short, creative videos that resonate with diverse audiences (Wu et al., 2010). Croes and Bartels (2021) identify entertainment-driven content, such as trends and humorous videos, as a key driver of user engagement on TikTok, particularly for younger demographics. SMEs can leverage these formats to connect with consumers, using humor or relatable scenarios to promote products. For example, F&B businesses create "day-in-the-life" videos to showcase authenticity, aligning with user preferences for lighthearted content (Barta & Andalibi, 2021).

The pleasure-arousal-dominance model, as applied by Zhang et al. (2023), shows that TikTok's hedonic and utilitarian values influence purchase intentions through emotional enjoyment. Fun content, like viral challenges or live streams, strengthens brand attachment by fostering a sense of community (Erviti & Stengler, 2016; Guarriello, 2019; Wang, 2024). Unlike informational content, which Wahid et al. (2023) find less engaging globally, fun content on TikTok drives higher social media engagement for SMEs through likes, shares, and comments. This engagement is critical for Indonesian SMEs, where entertaining content can overcome resource constraints, offering a cost-effective way to build brand loyalty and market presence in a competitive digital landscape.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts an ethnographic approach to explore how food and beverage (F&B) small and medium enterprise (SME) owners in Indonesia position themselves as personal brands through fun, authentic content on TikTok, capturing the social realities of their digital practices. By delving into the lived experiences of these entrepreneurs, the research examines how storytelling fosters audience engagement and drives marketing outcomes. Data collection involved direct encounters with four SME owners, selected through purposive sampling based on their significant TikTok presence, as determined by their

follower count and engagement metrics observed on January 11, 2025. The selection criteria ensured participants had a substantial online impact, reflecting their role as micro-celebrities in the F&B sector. In-depth interviews provided raw insights into their content creation processes, while visual observations of their TikTok videos offered context on audience interactions, such as comments and shares, to deepen the understanding of engagement dynamics.

To ensure a robust analysis, data were methodically processed through thematic reduction and categorization, aligning with established ethnographic frameworks. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of authenticity, emotional connection, and storytelling in the participants' TikTok content, cross-referenced with audience motives like information sharing, entertainment, and companionship, as outlined in prior studies (Croes & Bartels, 2021). This process involved coding interview transcripts and video content to uncover recurring themes, ensuring interpretations accurately reflected the phenomenon. Visual materials, including short-form videos, were analyzed to assess how SME owners used TikTok features, such as live streams or viral trends, to build intimacy with audiences. To enhance credibility, the study employed triangulation by comparing interview data with audience comments and video analytics, addressing potential biases in self-reported data.

Despite its depth, the study acknowledges limitations, including its focus on a small sample of four F&B SME owners, which may limit generalizability to other sectors or regions. The purposive sampling method prioritized accounts with high engagement, potentially overlooking less prominent but equally innovative creators. Future research could expand the sample size or explore other industries to validate these findings. By maintaining strict academic standards, this study ensures that the data interpretation captures the essence of how TikTok's socio-digital fabric empowers SME owners to become brands, offering insights into the evolving landscape of digital marketing in Indonesia.

RESULTS

For business owners, especially in micro, small, and medium enterprises, entrepreneurs can internalize personal branding as an integral practice, build stories, and start introducing brands. Each of them tries to be active in the TikTok personal space, starting to record and distribute content. They also reflect on the practice of personal branding. Content producers can promote skills, experiences, and personalities, especially in the market context. They compete to see opportunities through content to get the audience's attention. Personal branding can build an important reputation and value for producers who are also businesspeople. Media is present not only as a space for interaction but also as a space for work, which is important in building a professional portfolio. For this reason, this study examines how workspaces are created in digital spaces and questions how audiences will be in the future, especially in the SME market, where this is related to the micro, and how this audience is attracted to the human brand through the stories that are presented and by the audience.

Table 1. Data Participants

Participant	Number of Followers	Number of Likes
@daniellesugiharto	13.1 K	485.4 K
@desiree.tarigan	234.7K	2.2 M
@warungmamazafran12	443K	25.4 M
@moucup	562,2k	10 M

Table 1, detailing the profiles of the four SME owners, provides a foundation for understanding their TikTok presence, with follower counts ranging from 13.1K to 562.2K and likes from 485.4K to 25.4M as of January 11, 2025. These participants, operating F&B businesses across various Indonesian cities, use TikTok to share daily activities, such as preparing food or managing their shops, to build relatable personas. Figure 1, processed by researchers, illustrates the integration of SMEs into TikTok's digital ecosystem,

showing how these owners transform routine tasks into engaging content. For instance, one owner shares the process of setting up a food stall, capturing moments like arranging products or interacting with customers, which resonate with viewers seeking authentic narratives. Another owner highlights personal business struggles, such as overcoming financial setbacks, to create compelling stories that evoke empathy and admiration from audiences.

The Sweet Spot of SME Success on TikTok



Figure 1. The world of SMEs in TikTok

Table 2. How TikTok Drives Intimacy with Audience

Aspect	TikTok and Connection
TikTok as a media space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents authentic content • Unlike Instagram, it uses minimal filters • A fun platform to share silly, unique, and everyday experiences
Supporting features & policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized <i>For You Page</i> • Expressive video format • Allows anonymous usernames and multiple accounts
User perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic content becomes normalized and highly valued by users
Impact on social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience formation and interpersonal relationships • Development of a culture centered on emotional storytelling
Examples of creators' greetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • @mamitoko: "Hi friends, this is mommy's..." followed by daily activities • @warungmamazafran12: "Hi, good morning, back at mama Zafran's shop..." with shop visuals • @daniellsugiharto: Starts with questions or touching stories related to his business life • @moucup: Often begins with "When the lady boss..." and portrays maid-employer dynamics
Meaning of the greetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using greetings full of "enthusiasm" and positive emotions is considered part of the creative worker's requirements (Duffy & Wissinger, 2017)
Implication of authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity serves as a norm in TikTok's socio-technical design • Encourages emotional expression and social support • For business creators, it aids in audience connection and sales strategy

The content creation strategies of these SME owners emphasize authenticity and emotional engagement, often using consistent greetings or relatable themes. One owner positions themselves as a nurturing figure, sharing food preparation videos that evoke

warmth and prompt viewers to comment on the appeal of the dishes or inquire about ordering. Another owner focuses on daily shop routines, such as serving small-scale customers, which inspires comments expressing shared experiences or aspirations for similar success. These strategies, detailed in Table 2, highlight how TikTok’s design, featuring minimal filters, a personalized “For You” page, and expressive video formats, supports intimate audience connections. The table underscores the platform’s role in normalizing authentic content, contrasting with Instagram’s aesthetic focus, and fostering a digital culture centered on emotional storytelling.

Figure 2, illustrating TikTok’s structural support for micro-celebrities, shows how platform features like vertical videos and live streaming enable SME owners to build accessibility and engagement. For example, one owner uses live streaming to share recipes in real time, fostering direct interactions where viewers offer feedback or express anticipation for weekly sessions. This real-time engagement strengthens audience loyalty, as viewers feel personally invested in the owner’s journey. Another owner employs question-driven content to highlight their entrepreneurial experiences, encouraging comments that reflect emotional resonance, such as nostalgia for similar cultural practices or admiration for their resilience. These interactions demonstrate how TikTok’s socio-technical design amplifies the impact of personal branding for SMEs.

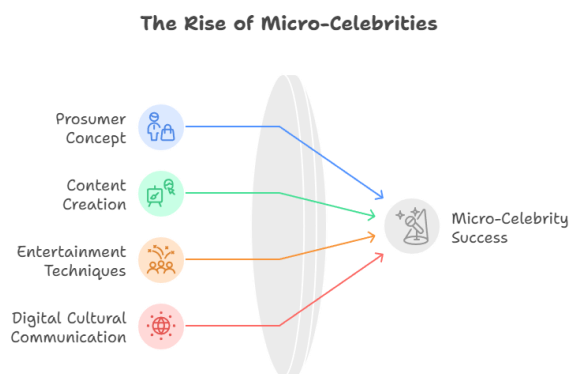


Figure 2. TikTok structure for Micro-celebrities

Figure 3, a flowchart processed by researchers, outlines the cyclical process of how SME owners build relationships on TikTok through storytelling, audience interaction, and brand loyalty. The flowchart illustrates how consistent, authentic content leads to emotional connections, which translate into digital and offline outcomes, such as increased store visits. For instance, one owner’s content about modest daily profits or simple operations inspires viewers to travel significant distances to try their food, motivated by the relatability of the shared stories. Another owner’s videos about cooking for employees elicit comments that evoke familial connections, with viewers relating to the cultural significance of the dishes. This flowchart highlights the iterative nature of engagement, where audience feedback further shapes content creation, reinforcing the micro-celebrity persona.

The emotional and relational labor of these SME owners is critical to their success as micro-celebrities. By presenting unfiltered glimpses of their lives, such as managing small-scale businesses or interacting with local communities, they create a sense of accessibility that contrasts with mainstream media personas. Audiences respond with comments reflecting camaraderie, such as concerns about the owners’ health or celebrations of their achievements, indicating a strong emotional bond. This labor, as detailed in Table 2, involves managing personal narratives to maintain audience connections, aligning with the concept of relational work (Baym, 2018). For example, one owner’s content about frugal living prompts viewers to share similar experiences, while another’s videos about employee outings inspire comments praising their authenticity as entrepreneurs.

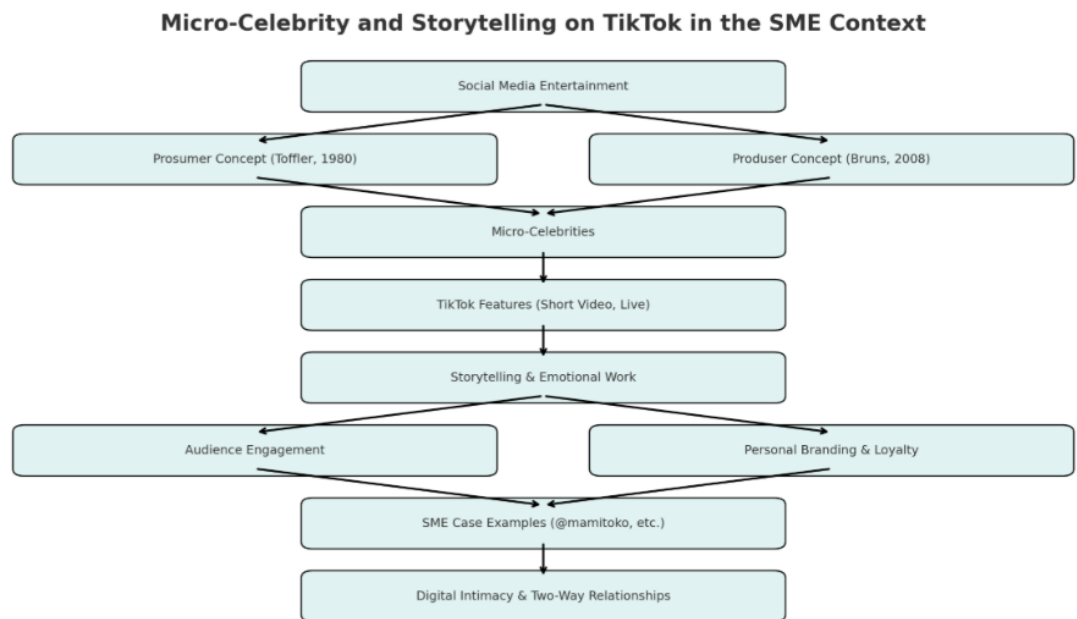


Figure 3. Flowchart of how micro-celebrities and UMKM can build relationships on TikTok

The findings demonstrate that TikTok's platform empowers SME owners to transcend digital boundaries, translating online engagement into tangible business outcomes. The authenticity of their narratives drives significant audience interaction, both in the digital space and in physical store visits. For instance, viewers from diverse regions, including some from abroad, visit one owner's stall after being captivated by their content, highlighting the platform's ability to bridge virtual and real-world interactions. Gambar 3 further emphasizes this impact, showing how the cycle of storytelling and engagement creates a loyal community that supports both the personal brand and the business. These results underscore TikTok's transformative potential for SMEs, offering a cost-effective model for building brand awareness and customer loyalty in Indonesia's competitive F&B market.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights the transformative role of TikTok in enabling food and beverage (F&B) small and medium enterprise (SME) owners in Indonesia to become micro-celebrities through authentic, fun content, challenging the aesthetic-driven norms of platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Unlike Instagram, which emphasizes curated visuals, TikTok's focus on raw, relatable narratives allows SME owners to connect emotionally with audiences, fostering brand loyalty and driving sales (Apaolaza et al., 2020). According to Abidin (2016), the platform's socio-technical design, including its "For You" page and short-form video format, amplifies visibility for small-scale entrepreneurs who lack resources for traditional marketing. This accessibility enables owners to present themselves as human brands, blending personal and professional identities to create a sense of intimacy that resonates with viewers (Khamis et al., 2017). The findings suggest that TikTok's emphasis on authenticity over aesthetics redefines digital marketing strategies for SMEs, particularly in Indonesia's competitive F&B sector.

The success of these SME owners as micro-celebrities stems from their ability to leverage storytelling, as noted by Marwick (2015), who argues that micro-celebrities thrive by creating an illusion of two-way relationships. By sharing daily activities, such as preparing food or managing shops, owners cultivate relatability that contrasts with the polished personas on mainstream media. This authenticity aligns with TikTok's digital culture, where unfiltered content is normalized and valued (Barta & Andalibi, 2021). For instance, Zhang et al. (2023) highlight that TikTok's hedonic and utilitarian values, driven by fun content, enhance consumer purchase intentions, a dynamic evident in the study's

findings where audience comments reflect emotional connections. Unlike Instagram, which often requires advertising support to reach audiences, TikTok's algorithm enables organic reach, making it a cost-effective platform for SMEs facing resource constraints during economic challenges like the post-pandemic recovery (Chen et al., 2021).

The emotional and relational labor involved in crafting authentic content is central to the SME owners' success. By consistently engaging with audiences through comments or live streams, owners build digital communities that translate into offline outcomes, such as store visits. Baym (2018) emphasizes that this relational work fosters audience investment, a key factor in the loyalty observed among viewers who travel to visit these businesses. The findings also reveal a contrast with platforms like Instagram, where aesthetic investments often overshadow personal narratives. TikTok's minimal reliance on filters or high production values allows SME owners to focus on operational efficiency while still achieving marketing impact, addressing the challenges of limited resources noted in prior studies (Akpan et al., 2021).

These findings have significant implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this study extends the work of Senft (2013) by demonstrating how micro-celebrity practices can be applied to non-Western SME contexts, enriching the understanding of personal branding in digital marketing. It also contributes to the uses and gratifications theory by showing how TikTok fulfills entertainment and social interaction needs for audiences, driving engagement with SME content (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Practically, SME owners can adopt TikTok's storytelling and live streaming features to build authentic brands, prioritizing daily narratives over aesthetic perfection. Future research should explore larger samples across diverse sectors to enhance generalizability, while practitioners can leverage these insights to develop cost-effective marketing strategies, particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that food and beverage (F&B) small and medium enterprise (SME) owners in Indonesia harness TikTok's unique platform to become micro-celebrities, using fun, authentic content to build personal brands and enhance marketing outcomes. By sharing relatable narratives, such as daily shop activities or personal business struggles, these owners foster emotional connections with audiences, driving brand awareness and customer loyalty. The concept of "You are a Brand" is vividly demonstrated as owners transform routine tasks into compelling stories, leveraging TikTok's features like live streaming and short-form videos to create digital communities. This approach redefines digital marketing for SMEs, emphasizing authenticity over aesthetics and enabling small-scale businesses to compete in Indonesia's dynamic F&B market.

The findings offer significant implications for SME owners, suggesting that prioritizing authentic storytelling and interactive features like live streams can build strong audience relationships and increase offline sales. However, the study's focus on four F&B SME owners limits its generalizability to other sectors or regions, and the small sample size may not capture the full diversity of TikTok strategies. Future research could explore larger samples across various industries, such as fashion or services, to validate these findings and investigate how cultural differences influence content creation. SME owners can adopt strategies like daily vlogs or viral challenges to enhance engagement, while policymakers could support digital literacy programs to empower more entrepreneurs to leverage TikTok effectively.

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