

## Study of Digital Marketing Strategy: Case Study of SMEs in Cocoa Product Industry in West Sulawesi Province

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#### ABSTRACT

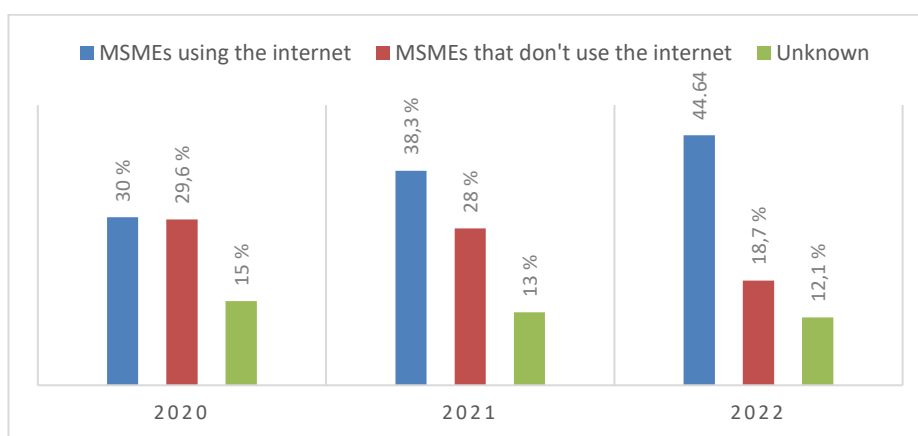
The purpose of this research is to examine digital marketing strategies for processed cocoa products, a leading commodity in West Sulawesi province, Indonesia. The goal is to facilitate access to the global market through the application of digital marketing strategies, offering solutions for cocoa product entrepreneurs in West Sulawesi province to reach a wider audience. The study was conducted in West Sulawesi province, Indonesia, with 94 respondents from cocoa-processed product SMEs actively utilizing digital media as a marketing tool. Quantitative methods were employed, and data were collected through a survey questionnaire, which was then analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The respondents were affiliated with businesses fostered by the West Sulawesi Cooperatives and SMEs Office. The results indicated that the adoption of e-commerce by Cocoa Product SMEs is an alternative solution for implementing sustainable digital marketing strategies. The findings from this study can serve as valuable input for SMEs producing processed cocoa products, enabling them to maximize the use of e-commerce to enter the global market.

**Keywords:** Cocoa Product, Digital Marketing, e-Commerce, SMEs, Strategy

## INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises were considered to be more resilient at the beginning of the monetary crisis era compared to large entrepreneurs. MSMEs are able to maintain their performance compared to large entrepreneurs because they are proven to be supported by technological developments that run in-line with scientific advances and are driven by community needs such as ease of activity to remain productive after the pandemic. MSME in Indonesia has grown rapidly due to the use of technology as well (Sumarlinah et al., 2022). The encouragement of these needs has given birth to various innovations, including in the MSME sector. The strong resilience of MSMEs is because their capital structure depends on their own capital. The performance of MSMEs is not enough to be measured in financial terms alone but needs to be balanced with non-financial measurements. To make it easier to achieve the desired targets, many companies are competing to take advantage of technological sophistication by switching to electronic commerce. The term for using the internet as a marketing medium can be called e-commerce, which is a business activity marketing goods and services carried out automatically through an electronic system using a computer or smartphone. E-commerce is also often referred to as one of the drivers of economic growth in Indonesia, one of which is the potential for MSMEs to drive the economy. The MSME sector is required to make changes and innovations to expand its marketing network to reach international markets by utilizing e-commerce to facilitate online marketing and sales. Almost all MSMEs in West Sulawesi province of Indonesia have experienced rapid development due to the use of e-commerce, such as in the agricultural sector, processing industry, trade, and services. E-commerce offers many benefits for SMEs looking to improve the marketing of their products. In terms of finance, online marketing is very promising for increasing business profits (BPS Sulbar, 2022). In addition, the internet also provides benefits to increase the opportunity for SMEs to collaborate with other entrepreneurs. Based on data from BPS West Sulawesi, around 44.64% of MSEs that use the internet will have increased profits in 2022, and 25.91% will have fixed profits. In contrast to the condition of profits in MSEs that do not use the internet. Only 31.75% of MSEs that did not use the internet experienced an increase in profits in 2022. The majority experienced a fixed profit, namely 37.84% of MSEs that did not use the internet, which obtained a fixed profit in 2022.

**Figure 1. The Following is a Table of e-Commerce User Data on MSMEs in West Sulawesi**



Micro, small, and medium enterprises in West Sulawesi province contribute to the structure of the local economy. The development of MSMEs in West Sulawesi contributed to economic growth in 2022 by 2.50%, and exports in the West Sulawesi MSME sector were recorded to have increased by 13.73% in the first quarter of 2022 in

line with the decline in CPO production as the main export commodity of West Sulawesi (bi.go.id, 2022). This is relevant to research (Wijaya et al., 2022) showing that MSMEs are a factor in creating economic value in the structure of the national economy. The high performance of MSMEs in West Sulawesi province is indirectly determined by the support of business information systems; the formulation of strategies for the development of MSMEs is determined by complete, accurate, and timely information. (Turkyilmaz et al., 2020) said that the main weakness of MSMEs in making decisions is due to a lack of relevant information. So important is information in the development of MSMEs that (Zahari et al., 2008) said that the development of MSME performance must be supported by quality information to help improve its performance. With the development of information technology, such as the internet and other networks, it has had an impact on the marketing and sales of MSME products. This means that MSMEs in West Sulawesi must have a competitive advantage, among others, in the field of technology as another external support that affects e-commerce adoption. According to (Sousa & Aspinwall, 2010), the obstacles faced by MSMEs in entering and penetrating the market are information, innovation, and product quality. MSMEs are strategically planned, which is assisted by adopting e-commerce with the aim of maintaining their competitive edge. Currently, people can transact easily only through a smartphone by scanning the QR-Code Indonesian Standard (QRIS). To date, e-commerce transactions using QRIS have been widely accepted by the public.

**Table 2. The Following is the Value and Volume of E-Commerce Transactions per Region in West Sulawesi Province**

Wilayah	2021		Januari 2022		Februari 2022	
	Nilai	Volume	Nilai	Volume	Nilai	Volume
Majene	344.140.659	454	124.894.286	140	132.194.286	143
Mamasa	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mamuju	3.500.001	8	500.000	1	500.000	1
Mateng	2.785.358	18	8.673.626	14	37.375.371	53
Pasangkayu	1.485.000	44	135.000	4	135.000	4
Polman	181.849.935	360	75.446.795	102	95.506.540	152

The value of e-commerce transactions in West Sulawesi province in the first quarter of 2022 (January and February) was recorded at Rp 4.24 billion with a volume of 39,692 transactions. When viewed spatially, it is known that in the first quarter of 2022, Majene Regency and Polewali Mandar regency were the areas with the largest P2G (person-to-government) e-commerce transactions, which amounted to Rp 257.09 million and Rp 170.95 million, respectively.

The main focus of the current piece of literature is on the influences of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy on the use of e-commerce. In the past literature, many researchers and academics have debated on the contribution of innovation adoption e-commerce. But all these researchers and scholars have thrown light on the influences of these factors on strategy variable separately (Ramadania & Braridwan, 2019). Our study fills this literary gap by exploring the role of all perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy in use of e-commerce in a single whole, by utilizing the TAM (*Technology Acceptance Model*) theoretical approach which is one of the models built to analyze and understand the factors that influence the acceptance of technology use first introduced by Fred Davis in 1986.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the modern world, people are well aware of the importance of digitization in the quality of products sold and services provided by organizations. This means that organizations must have a competitive advantage, among others in the field of technology as external support, in order to compete successfully, organizations need to create value in current products and services, create entirely new products, adopt innovative business and marketing procedures (Värzaru et al., 2021). This can be done if the organization's personnel have usage skills such as the reactions and perceptions of information technology users that influence their strategies in accepting the technology and finding solutions to problems. The use of technology eases the users to complete their tasks, build up business, and others (Satoto & Putra, 2021). There are several factors that influence the use of e-commerce in business processes. Our research examines the impact of strategies such as perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy on e-commerce users. Many of these studies have been cited in this literary workout.

### **Perceived Ease of Use and Use of e-Commerce**

Perceived ease of use can convince users that the information technology to be applied is an easy thing and not a burden for them. Communication and information technology that is not difficult to use will continue to be applied by companies. Perceived ease of use describes the level of a person's belief that using an information system is easy and does not require great effort from the user. This convenience will reduce the energy, thoughts, and time used to learn and use information systems. The effect of perceived ease of use on the use of e-learning is supported by the technology acceptance model, which explains and estimates user acceptance of an information system. The technology acceptance model provides a theoretical basis for knowing the factors that influence the acceptance of a technology in an organization. This is supported by research (Wilson et al., 2021). The factor that directly affects the acceptance of information technology is perceived usefulness, which is defined as the user's perception of the usefulness of information technology and is indirectly influenced by perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment, which is defined as the user's perception of ease and comfort. In addition, in research conducted by (Wilson, 2019) found that perceived ease of use affects the use of e-commerce. Thus, comfort in using the system is a factor that directly affects the acceptance of information technology and is indirectly affected by the perceived ease of use factor. Hence, we can say:

H1: perceived ease of use has a positive effect on use of e-commerce.

### **Perceived Usefulness and Use of e-Commerce**

Perceived usefulness is the level of a person's belief that by using an information system, his performance will also increase. From this definition, it is known that perceived usefulness is a belief about the decision-making process. If someone believes that the system is useful, he will use it. The effect of perceived usefulness on the use of e-learning is supported by the technology acceptance model, which explains and predicts user acceptance of an information system (Hsieh, 2020). (Su, 2019), in his research on building a shopping-oriented technology acceptance model on the basis of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, reveals that perceived usefulness is a decision-making process that influences usage behavior to strengthen marketing opportunities and increase purchase impulses.

The technology acceptance model provides a theoretical basis for knowing the factors that influence the acceptance of a technology in an organization. Thus, if someone believes that information technology is useful, he will use it. Hence, we can say:

H2: perceived usefulness has a positive effect on use of e-commerce.

### **Self-Efficacy and Use of e-Commerce**

Self-efficacy is a person's ability or belief to motivate them to take action in the face of situations and demands. The definition of self-efficacy continues to evolve. Bandura defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief about his or her ability to organize and complete a task required to achieve a certain result. Self-belief refers to the extent to which an individual estimates his or her ability to perform a task or perform a task required to achieve a particular outcome. This belief in all abilities includes self-confidence, adaptability, cognitive capacity, intelligence, and the capacity to act in stressful situations. The effect of self-efficacy on e-commerce adoption is supported by research conducted by (Gantulga et al., 2021), which shows that one's own beliefs affect one's performance results. This means that the higher the self-belief, the more effective it is. The high level of perceived self-belief will cognitively motivate individuals to act appropriately and purposefully, especially if the goal to be achieved is a clear one. we can say:

H3: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on use of e-commerce.

### **Mediating Role of Strategy**

Strategy is an evaluation of a person's positive or negative beliefs or feelings if they have to perform a behavior that will be determined. Defines strategy as a disposition to act positively or negatively towards an object, person, institution, or event and is measured by a procedure that places the individual on a two-pole evaluative scale, for example, good or bad; agree or reject; and others (Ajzen, 2020). Regarding work strategies, the work strategies that every member of the organization must have in their work are: cooperation, honesty, accessing and organizing information, responsibility, effectiveness and efficiency, and independence (Bhatti & Ur Rehman, 2020). People use information technology because they believe that achievement and performance will increase. This concept describes the measure by which the use of a technology is believed to bring benefits to the user (Ahmad et al., 2019). The effect of strategy as a mediating variable between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy on e-commerce usage is also supported by the Technology Acceptance Model. The technology acceptance model explains and predicts user acceptance of an information system. The technology acceptance model provides a theoretical basis for knowing the factors that influence the acceptance of a technology in an organization. This is supported by research conducted by (Mahfud et al., 2020), which shows that ease of use has a positive effect on perceived benefits and strategies toward use. This shows that if a system is easy to use, it will provide benefits to its users and affect their acceptance of the system. In addition, research conducted by (Night & Bananuka, 2020) shows that the application of electronic systems and strategies towards electronic taxation systems are significantly related to taxpayer compliance.

Therefore, confidence itself has a considerable role for individuals in achieving goals by using their abilities. This strategy facilitates the organization in developing on use of e-commerce. Similarly, self-efficacy, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use in the market trends, products and services, technology and logistics used in marketing, marketing channels, product design and packaging, enhances of e-commerce, which in turn facilitate the development of creativity in the business (Zhang & Zhu, 2019). Hence, we can hypothesize:

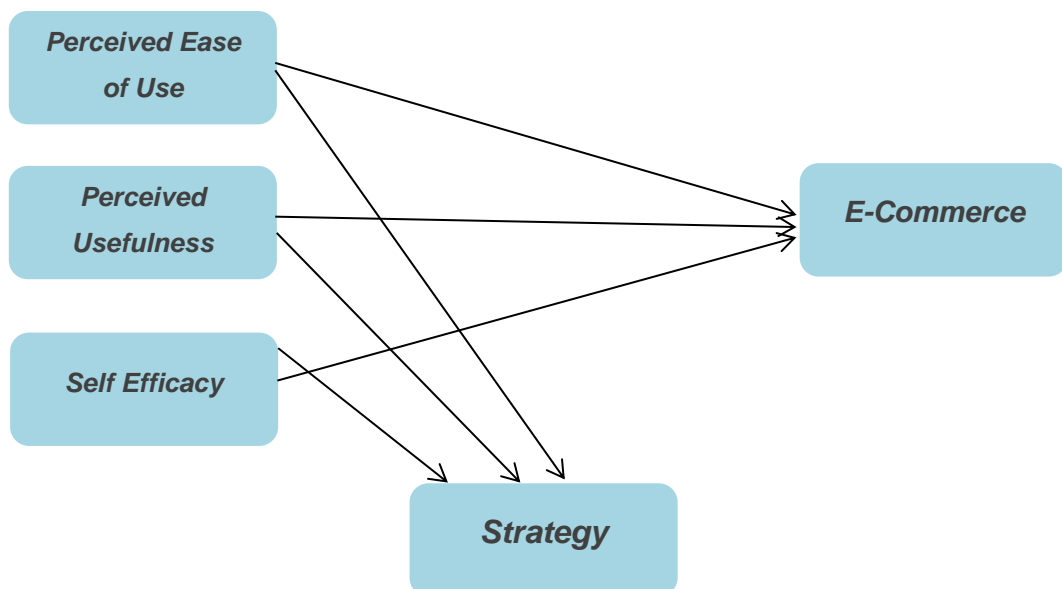
H4: Strategy has a positive effect on use of e-commerce;

H5: Strategy is a mediator between perceived ease of use; perceived usefulness; self-efficacy; and use of e-commerce.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This paper examines the impact of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy on use of e-commerce and investigates the mediating role of strategy between the relations of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy, and e-commerce in MSMEs in West Sulawesi province. This paper has followed the quantitative methods and used survey questionnaires for data collection. MSMEs that have implemented e-commerce systems in their business activities (94 completed surveys) of the micro, small, and medium enterprises sector in West Sulawesi province are the respondents. Individual respondents were asked to choose one of the answers by marking the answer options provided in the questionnaire, which was then analyzed using covariance-based *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) analysis to be variant-based. Covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) generally tests causality or theory, while partial least squares is more of a predictive model. The study model of the relations is as follows (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Theoretical Model



## RESULTS

Before the analysis of the study hypothesis, the model was evaluated for its fitness levels, and the data was analyzed using a component-based or variant Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) equation model approach. According to (Awang et al., 2015), the purpose of structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis is to help researchers for prediction purposes. The formal model defines the latent variable as a linear aggregate of its indicators. Weight estimates to create latent variable score components are obtained based on how the inner model (the structural model that connects latent variables) and outer model (the measurement model, namely the relationship between indicators and their constructs) are specified. The result is the residual variance of the dependent variable. The structural equation modeling (SEM) equation model uses a 3-stage iteration process, and each iteration stage produces an estimate. The first stage produces weight estimates; the second stage produces estimates for the inner model and outer model; and the third stage produces estimates of means and locations (Awang et al., 2015).

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Example (N = 94)**

Variabel	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived ease of use	94	1	5	3.93	0.871
perceived usefulness	94	1	5	3.84	0.904
self-efficacy	94	1	5	4.29	0.754
Strategy	94	1	5	4.12	0.840
E-commerce	94	1	5	4.39	0.762

Note: M = Mean, Std = Standard Deviation.

This study has shown the factor loadings of the items that exposed the validity of the items. The values of factor loadings are more than 0.50 that show items are highly correlated and valid. These values have been mentioned in Table 3.

The model and constructs were also evaluated for reliability and validity levels. These were evaluated using convergent reliability (CV), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha. The values of CR and Alpha are more than 0.50, and the AVE values are more than 0.70 that show items are highly correlated and valid. These values have been mentioned in Table 4.

**Table 4. Validity and Reliability Analysis**

Variabel	Alpha	CR	AVE
Perceived ease of use	0.915	0.935	0.706
Perceived usefulness	0.934	0.948	0.754
Self-efficacy	0.929	0.949	0.785
Strategy	0.945	0.961	0.744
e-Commerce	0.929	0.964	0.859
Alpha = Alpha Cronbach, CR= Composite Reliability AVE = Average Variance Extracted			

After evaluating the model fitness, reliability, and validity measurements of the model and average variance extracted, it was time to conduct the analysis for evaluating the hypothesis of the study. The structural equation modelling was conducted and the results are presented in the table and figure below.

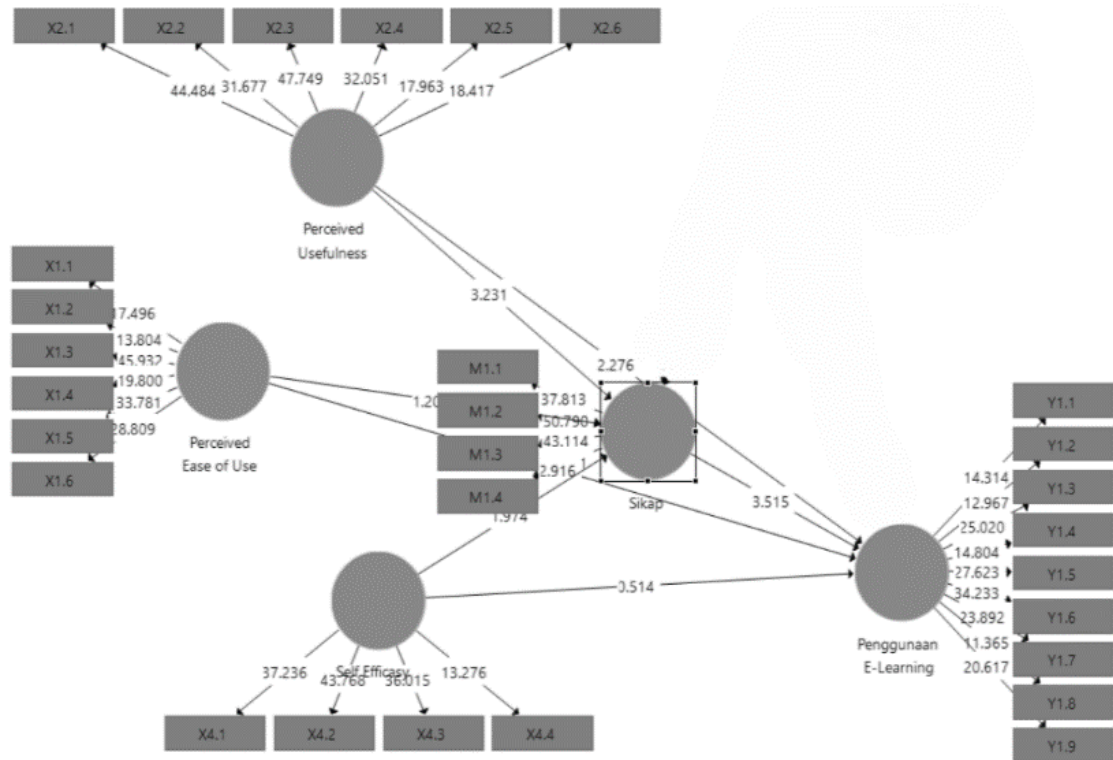
**Table 5. Hypothesis Analysis**

Hypothesis	Paths			Original Sample	Sample Mean	C.R.	p-value
<b>H1</b>	PEU	→	EC	0.212	0.211	2.916	0.004
<b>H2</b>	PU	→	EC	-0.200	-0.207	2.273	0.023
<b>H3</b>	SE	→	EC	0.530	0.531	5.068	0.000
<b>H4</b>	AT	→	EC	0.325	0.390	4.698	0.003
<b>H5</b>	PEU →	AT →	EC	0.156	0.149	2.204	0.019
	PU →	AT →	EC	0.134	0.134	2.438	0.015
	SE →	AT →	EC	0.129	0.132	2.034	0.043
Significant at < 0.05 level, PEU = Perceived Ease of Use, PU = Perceived Usefulness, SE = Self-Efficacy, AT = Strategy, EC = E-Commerce							

The path coefficient between perceived ease of use and e-commerce was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) confirming H1. The path coefficient between perceived usefulness and e-commerce was positive and significant ( $\beta = -0.200$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ) confirming H2. The path coefficient between self-efficacy and e-commerce was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.530$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) confirming H3. The path coefficient between strategy and e-commerce was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.325$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) confirming H4. The research also indicated that strategy significantly mediates the effect of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy on e-commerce, hence confirming hypothesis 5.



Figure 2. Research Model



## DISCUSSION

The results showed that perceived ease of use has a positive relationship with the use of e-commerce by MSMEs in West Sulawesi. The meaning of the findings of this study shows that perceived ease of use can better influence the process of using e-commerce for MSME players. These results are evidence that perceived ease of use makes it easier for MSME players in West Sulawesi province to carry out business processes based on e-commerce systems so as to facilitate online marketing and sales even without direct face-to-face contact with consumers, and that a business goal can be fully achieved. In general, the results of testing the hypothesis of this study are in line with the technology acceptance model theory, where the technology acceptance model explains and estimates user acceptance of an information system. These results are in line with previous research by (Pratama et al., 2019), this study discusses the factors that determine the decision to use e-commerce services.

This study concluded that perceived ease of use, word-of-mouth communication, and image brands that must be followed by organizational personnel when carrying out their business duties, consumers, and the huge opportunities for online stores have an impact on the emergence of more e-commerce whose goods or products are sold from their own website or application without providing opportunities or places for other sellers to sell their products. These results are also in line with previous research (Doshi, 2018), which states that there is a positive relationship between the parameters of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness in the use of e-commerce sites.

Organizations have innovation-oriented behavior, employees have the ability to think and perform creatively, and online shopping has become commonplace among the public. Especially in places where time and distance are major constraints, people are found to prefer online shopping on e-commerce systems. The study implies that the impact of

perceived usefulness in marketing channels, and sustainability in this marketing innovation forces the MSMEs actors in West Sulawesi province to activeness use of e-commerce and find out the problems challenging innovative marketing and to find out solutions to those problems.

Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which a person believes that the use of certain information systems will improve their performance. With perceived usefulness, MSME players believe that the use of e-commerce in facilitating online marketing can increase sales, but it depends on the perceived usefulness and level of user approval of conducting business transactions online. These results are approved by the previous study of (Mican et al., 2020), the findings have practical implications for e-commerce industry players indicate that an e-commerce perceived usefulness positively and significantly influences the extent to which users consent to the system provider collecting and storing their data. These results are also approved by the previous study of (Wafiyah & Kusumadewi, 2021), which shows that perceived usefulness, and trust had a positive and significant effect on repurchase intentions on Shopee e-commerce.

This all brings newness and innovation in the business operations. In addition, the study results have indicated that strategy is an appropriate mediator between perceived usefulness and e-commerce. These results are also in line with the past study of (Abdurakhimovna et al., 2021), which suggests that perceived usefulness has a positive effect on the use of a system which is reinforced by strategy. In general, the results of testing the research hypothesis are supported by the theory of the Technology Acceptance Model, in which the Technology Acceptance Model explains the causal relationship between beliefs about the benefits of an information system and the ease of use of an information system.

In addition, the study results have indicated that Self-efficacy is an appropriate mediator between strategy and use of e-commerce (Su, 2019). The meaning of this research finding shows that self-efficacy can influence MSME actors towards the process of using e-commerce in West Sulawesi province. These results are evidence that the self-efficacy possessed by each user is sufficient to make them confident to use e-commerce in the business process of MSME players. These results are in line with the past study of (Nurchayati et al., 2023), which results show that perceived self-efficacy had a positive effect on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. These three antecedents in turn have a positive and significant effect on future e-commerce shopping interest by using mediation of user strategy. The internet entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale has 16 items under three factors *i.e.* leadership, technology utilization and internet marketing and e-commerce (Wang et al., 2020). One of the reasons why MSME players in West Sulawesi province use e-commerce is to encourage innovation and creativity, which are very important for success in the market.

The current study has made both theoretical and empirical implications. It has remarkable theoretical significance due to its dramatic contribution to the literature on use of e-commerce. It highlights the influences of three factors such as perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy of e-commerce. The study makes a great contribution to the existing management-based literature with the introduction of strategy users as a mediator between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy and adoption of e-commerce. The current study has both theoretical and empirical implications. It has remarkable theoretical significance due to its dramatic contribution to the literature on the use of e-commerce. It highlights the influences of three factors, such as perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy of e-commerce. The study makes a great contribution to the existing management-based literature with the introduction of strategy users as a mediator between perceived ease

of use, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy, and adoption of e-commerce. Thus, the current paper has great practical significance in the regional economy, like West Sulawesi province, because it provides guidance to MSMEs on how to encourage digitalization and expand their marketing network to reach international markets using e-commerce. This study says that the use of e-commerce to facilitate online marketing and sales in MSMEs can be created and developed with perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy, which are strengthened by user strategies towards e-commerce use.

## CONCLUSION

This research highlights the development as well as testing of a structural model. The model was evaluated for its fitness levels, and the data was analyzed using a component-based or variant structural equation modeling (SEM) equation approach. Based on data analysis, it can be concluded that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy have a positive effect on the use of e-commerce. These three antecedents, in turn, have a positive and significant effect on e-commerce through the mediation of user strategies. The results are theoretically useful for deepening the theory of the Technology Acceptance Model exploration by explaining and estimating user acceptance of an information system.

Practically, this study examined the impacts of perceived ease of use as easy to learn and easy to understand, increasing productivity, effectiveness, efficiency, and confidence in ability and knowledge in using the marketing system on the use of e-commerce. The study emphasized that self-efficacy in strategy towards system acceptance contributes greatly to the encouragement of the use of e-commerce by MSMEs in West Sulawesi.

Finally, this study concludes that MSME actors in West Sulawesi province adopt effective e-commerce to expand their marketing network so as to facilitate online marketing and sales and reach international markets. Further studies are expected to analyze the degree of MSMEs involvement in digital marketing as a consideration for exploring the antecedents of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, self-efficacy, and strategies. Furthermore, further studies are expected to expand the sample base to include a wider range of MSMEs.

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