



Revitalizing Qienzy variant drinks MSMEs in Medan Tuasan through innovation-based business models and digital transformation



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the business challenges faced by Qienzy Variant Drinks MSME in Medan Tembung and proposes revitalization strategies through innovation-driven business models and digital transformation. As micro-enterprises operate in an increasingly competitive and technology-oriented environment, the ability to innovate and adapt digitally has become essential for long-term sustainability and growth. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study collected data through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the business owner as the primary informant. The findings reveal that limited product innovation, reliance on manual operational processes, inadequate utilization of digital marketing, and the absence of structured management practices have constrained the enterprise's competitiveness and growth potential. To address these challenges, the study identifies several strategic priorities, including the adoption of digital technologies, continuous menu innovation, recruitment of personnel with relevant skills, and the implementation of a market-oriented business model. These initiatives are expected to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen market responsiveness, and improve overall business performance. The study contributes to the literature on micro-enterprise development and digital entrepreneurship by providing practical insights into how small businesses can adapt to the demands of the digital era. However, as the findings are derived from a single case study, future research is encouraged to involve a broader range of respondents or conduct comparative analyses across similar enterprises to improve the generalizability of the results.

Keywords: MSME; Business Innovation ; Digital Transformation



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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a critical role in strengthening national and regional economic resilience, particularly through employment creation, income distribution, and support for grassroots economic activity (Salsabillah et al., 2023). In Indonesia, MSMEs have long been regarded as an essential driver of economic dynamism due to their adaptability to local market conditions and their accessibility to diverse community segments (Aprieni et al., 2024). Despite their strategic importance, many MSMEs continue to face structural, operational, and technological challenges that hinder their ability to compete effectively in an increasingly digital and globalized market environment (Hendrawan et al., 2024).

The rapid growth of digital technologies has changed the way businesses operate (Fachrurazi et al., 2023). Consumers now expect faster services, more innovative products, and efficient business processes. Research at the international level shows that the success of digital transformation in small enterprises depends on organizational readiness, investment in digital skills, and structured capacity building (Gonzalez-Varona et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies in Indonesia reveal that the level of digital adoption among MSMEs is influenced by government policy, infrastructure availability, and the digital skills possessed by business owners and communities (Nugraha et al., 2025). Although digitalization offers opportunities for growth, many MSMEs struggle with limited capital, low digital literacy, and insufficient managerial capacity.

The beverage industry, especially contemporary flavored drink businesses, provides a clear example of changing consumer preferences. Modern customers seek attractive products, a wide selection of flavors, and convenient purchasing processes (Destyana & Handoyo, 2023). Qienzy Variant Drinks, a micro business located in Medan Tuasan, is one such enterprise facing these challenges. Although the business offers affordable drinks that are popular in the surrounding area, its operational activities still rely entirely on traditional methods. There are no digital ordering systems, online promotional activities, or technology-based customer engagement strategies, making it difficult for the business to expand its market reach. This condition is consistent with findings from national research, which emphasize that MSMEs in the food and beverage sector continue to face technological adaptation barriers and must adopt digital payment systems and online platforms to enhance competitiveness (Triana & Lestari, 2025).

Previous studies have shown that MSMEs that do not utilize digital tools tend to have slower growth and face more intense competition. Tarigan et al. (2025) argue that digital-based operational improvements, such as automated transactions and digital inventory management, can increase efficiency and improve service quality. However, many MSMEs have difficulty adopting these innovations because of limited access to digital knowledge and weak infrastructure support. At the same time, business model innovation is increasingly recognized as an important factor in improving MSME performance. Sutrisman & Susyanti (2025) explain that the use of e-commerce, social media marketing, and digital financial services can help MSMEs reach broader markets and strengthen customer relationships, although obstacles related to skills and financial capacity still exist.

Considering these challenges, revitalizing Qienzy Variant Drinks requires a business model that is oriented toward innovation and supported by digital transformation. Studies on Indonesian MSMEs emphasize the need for training programs, collaborative support, and the adoption of technology that is appropriate for the scale of the business (Sitompul et al., 2025). International research also highlights the importance

of organizational learning, capability development, and leadership commitment in ensuring the success of digital transformation efforts (Gonzalez-Varona et al., 2024). Therefore, this study aims to assess the current condition of Qienzy Variant Drinks, identify gaps in innovation and technology adoption, and develop revitalization strategies through the integration of digital tools and innovative business models. The findings of this research are expected to provide practical insights for micro beverage businesses operating in urban settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MSME Theory (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises)

MSME theory refers to the definition and characteristics of small businesses that have limited capital, simple operational systems, and management that is still centered on the owner. According to Law No. 20 of 2008, MSMEs play a major role in driving national economic growth through employment, income distribution, and strengthening the local economy (Wati et al., 2024). These characteristics help us understand how MSMEs operate with high flexibility but still face limitations in terms of industry and management professionalism.

In the context of Qienzy Beverage MSMEs, this theory is relevant because the business is still fully managed by the owner, from beverage mixing, financial recording, to sales. This condition reflects the typical characteristics of MSMEs that face limitations in organizational structure and minimal division of tasks. Knowledge of MSME theory helps identify Qienzy's weaknesses, such as limited production capacity and a lack of structured innovation, thereby facilitating business improvement analysis.

Business Revitalization Theory

Business revitalization theory explains the process of renewing and strengthening a business through reforms in management, operations, and marketing strategy (Mainingsih, 2023). This theory emphasizes the importance of updating ineffective systems, improving product quality, and implementing innovations to adapt to market changes. Revitalization is carried out comprehensively so that the business can regain its competitiveness and sustainability in the long term (Richards et al., 2021).

At Qienzy MSME, the revitalization theory is very relevant because the business is facing various challenges such as unsystematic financial records, manual production processes, and limited beverage flavor variations. Revitalization is necessary for Qienzy to improve efficiency, improve service quality, and expand its market reach. The implementation of revitalization, such as equipment upgrades, digitization, and menu innovation, can help Qienzy strengthen its competitiveness amid increasingly fierce competition in the contemporary beverage market.

Innovation Theory

The theory of innovation states that business growth is greatly influenced by a company's ability to produce new products, new production methods, or create new markets (Henrekson et al., 2024). According to Schumpeter, innovation is the main driver of business sustainability, especially in dynamic industries such as food and beverages (Schumpeter, 1947, as cited in Irianto et al., 2025). MSMEs that lack innovation usually find it difficult to survive because consumers always want new products that are more attractive and have added value.

In the context of Qienzy, the theory of innovation is important because this business is still very limited to a few flavor variants and does not yet have a structured product innovation strategy. To compete with other beverage brands, Qienzy needs to create new flavor variants, conduct menu trials, and follow current beverage trends. Innovative menus and attractive packaging will increase consumer interest and strengthen Qienzy's position in the local market.

Theory of MSME Digitalization

The theory of MSME digitalization explains how small businesses can increase efficiency, expand markets, and improve competitiveness through the use of digital technology (Arifin et al., 2025). Digitalization includes application-based financial recording, digital marketing, digital inventory management, and the use of customer data for decision making (Verhoef et al., 2021). This theory is relevant to MSMEs because digitalization has been proven to improve data accuracy, reduce operational costs, and drive sales growth.

Qienzy Beverage MSMEs are in dire need of digitalization because their operations, record-keeping, and marketing are still done manually. By utilizing a digital cashier application, Qienzy can monitor income and expenses more accurately. Through digital marketing channels such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business, Qienzy can expand its market reach and increase sales. Digitalization is a strategic solution for Qienzy to adapt to the needs of the modern market.

Human Capital Development Theory

The Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker explains that improving the competence and skills of human resources is a form of investment that results in higher productivity for a business (Kim et al., 2022). In MSMEs, human resource improvement can take the form of training, recruitment of experts, or development of business owner knowledge in management, technology, and marketing. Competent human resources enable businesses to innovate, grow, and respond effectively to market changes (Kim et al., 2022).

This theory is closely related to Qienzy because the business currently relies solely on the owner's abilities without the support of professionals. By recruiting staff with expertise in technology, management, and digital marketing, Qienzy can build a stronger organizational structure. Human resource development helps increase production productivity, create better services, and strengthen the business's ability to compete in the contemporary beverage market (Khan et al., 2022). Human capital is an important factor for Qienzy to grow faster and become more modern.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach (Kosasih, 2021). This method was chosen because the researcher aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the conditions of Qianzy Drinks, a micro-business that sells various flavors of boba drinks in the Tuasan area of Medan City. The focus of the research is to explore the factors causing the decline in customer numbers and to identify solutions that can help the business grow again.

The study involves one informant, namely the owner of Qianzy Drinks. The informant was selected because they are considered the most knowledgeable about the business operations and the challenges it faces (Yuliana, 2022).

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted first to directly examine the business environment. After

that, the researcher carried out an interview with the owner to obtain more detailed information regarding sales strategies, challenges encountered, and the owner's perspective on the business condition (Prasetyo & Triswanto, 2025). Following the interview, the researcher also gathered documentation in the form of photos with the informant as evidence of the research activities.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis consisted of three stages: data reduction (filtering important information), data presentation (organizing interview and observation results systematically), and conclusion drawing (identifying meanings and solutions from the findings) (Miles et al., 2014). Through this approach, the researcher aims to provide a clear depiction and appropriate recommendations for Qianzy Drinks to improve its sales.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From an operational standpoint, Qienzy Beverage MSMEs are still managed simply by a single owner who also acts as the main manager of the business. Production, raw material purchasing, and sales are carried out independently without involving additional workers. The business is run through a single white stand, which serves as the main location for business activities and sales. Although its management system is still simple, Qienzy strives to maintain the taste and hygiene of its products so that they remain attractive to customers. However, on the other hand, limited human resources and a lack of innovative business strategies have slowed down the company's growth.

The main problem faced by Qienzy Beverage MSMEs is the low level of digital technology utilization in business activities. Business owners have not optimally utilized social media as a means of promotion and marketing. So far, the marketing methods used are still direct (offline), relying on buyers who come to the location. The lack of delivery apps, online ordering systems, or promotions through digital platforms limits Qienzy's market reach to its immediate surroundings. This condition slows down the growth of new customers, and opportunities to expand the market to other areas cannot be maximized. In addition, the business owner's limited capabilities in terms of promotional design, digital marketing strategies, and financial management also pose challenges in developing this business in a more modern direction (Andriani & Lestari, 2022).

Based on these conditions, revitalization efforts are needed for Qienzy Beverage MSMEs in order to increase their competitiveness and business sustainability amid dynamic changes in the business environment. This revitalization can be carried out through several strategic steps, including in-depth analysis of business conditions and challenges, implementation of innovative and market-based business models, and digital transformation in all aspects of operations and marketing. In addition, recruiting new members with expertise in information technology, management, and digital marketing is also necessary to strengthen the business's organizational structure (Budiman & Susanto, 2022). With the implementation of these strategies, it is hoped that Qienzy Beverage MSMEs will be able to expand their consumer reach, increase the effectiveness of their promotions, and strengthen their position as one of the MSMEs that are adaptive to technological developments in the digital era.

Analysis of Business Conditions and Operational Challenges

UMKM Minuman Varian Qienzy, located in Medan Tuasan, is a contemporary beverage business offering a range of flavors that appeal to diverse consumer groups, particularly young customers in the surrounding area. Based on the observations conducted, the

business is still operating at a basic managerial level, as all operational activities are independently managed by the owner. The owner simultaneously assumes the roles of manager, product formulator, inventory controller, and salesperson, resulting in a business model that is highly dependent on individual capacity. While this provides direct control over day-to-day operations, it restricts production volume, reduces service efficiency, and limits the ability to accommodate increases in consumer demand (Setiyawati & Hermawan, 2018).

Operationally, Qienzy runs from a single modest outlet that serves as the central hub for all business activities. The outlet is strategically positioned within a residential area near student communities, giving the business considerable market potential due to the alignment of its product offerings with the preferences of younger demographics. However, having only one point of sale narrows the scope of market penetration and confines sales performance to consumers within the immediate vicinity. This spatial limitation restricts the business's ability to reach a broader customer base and expand its market share (Aji & Listyaningrum, 2021).

In addition to spatial constraints, Qienzy also faces challenges related to production capacity and the diversification of its product offerings. All beverage preparation processes are carried out manually, which limits production scalability and may hinder the business's ability to meet fluctuations in demand. Although the business provides several flavor options, menu innovation has not been systematically or strategically planned. In a rapidly evolving beverage industry characterized by high competition and continuous product renewal, the absence of structured innovation may weaken Qienzy's competitive positioning against more dynamic competitors (Mukhlis et al., 2024).

From a managerial standpoint, the business's internal systems remain informal and underdeveloped. Financial management practices including tracking operational expenses, recording daily sales, calculating profits, and managing cash flow are not yet documented systematically. This lack of structured bookkeeping limits the owner's ability to analyze business performance, identify operational inefficiencies, or make informed strategic decisions. Similarly, inventory management is conducted manually and relies heavily on estimation, increasing the risk of mismatches between raw material availability and consumer demand. Such inconsistencies can disrupt operational continuity, elevate costs, and potentially diminish customer satisfaction. Establishing more formalized managerial systems would strengthen financial transparency, improve cost efficiency, and support long-term business sustainability (Hakim et al., 2024).

Overall, the current condition of Qienzy illustrates a business with strong market potential but limited by operational, managerial, and strategic challenges. Constraints in operational efficiency, systematic product innovation, production scalability, and administrative organization hinder the business's readiness to expand and compete within the broader beverage industry. Addressing these fundamental limitations is essential before moving toward a broader revitalization initiative. Implementing a comprehensive transformation strategy encompassing improved business processes, strengthened managerial systems, and an innovation-oriented business model would enable Qienzy to build a more competitive foundation, enhance brand value, and respond more effectively to evolving consumer preferences. These improvements are pivotal for enabling the business to compete with larger, more established beverage brands and seize emerging opportunities within the growing contemporary beverage market (Aziezy et al., 2024).

Implementation of an Innovative and Market-Based Business Model

The application of an innovative business model requires Qienzy Beverage UMKM to deeply understand shifts in consumer preferences so that the products offered not only follow market trends but also provide added value that differentiates them from competitors (Sipos et al., 2025). By identifying the main needs of customers such as affordable prices, trendy flavor variants, and a practical purchasing experience, Qienzy can establish product strategies that are more relevant and aligned with evolving market demands (Halijah & Fitriah, 2024).

A market-based business model also encourages Qienzy to innovate its menu not only by expanding flavor choices, but also by considering aspects of health, ingredient quality, and product presentation to attract young consumers (Sihombing et al., 2025). This approach enables the business to continuously create sustainable product differentiation, ensuring that customers have strong reasons to choose Qienzy over other beverage brands in the surrounding area (Sawitri et al., 2025).

In addition to product innovation, Qienzy needs to develop a more adaptive service model such as fast-order systems, bundling packages, or multiple drink sizes to give customers greater flexibility according to their preferences and purchasing capacity (Rohmah et al., 2025). Through these strategies, the business can broaden its consumer segments and increase repeat purchase opportunities because customers feel that their needs are fully accommodated (Fahimah & Jaya, 2025).

Business model innovation can also be implemented through collaborative strategies with external parties, for example, partnering with student communities, schools, or local event organizers to create special offerings tailored to local market needs (Susanti & Mawardi, 2025). This partnership approach not only expands distribution channels but also strengthens brand exposure by positioning Qienzy within environments that have large and stable potential customer bases (Arsalan et al., 2025).

To ensure innovation is carried out effectively, Qienzy requires periodic evaluations of consumer feedback so that business decisions can be based on concrete and accurate data regarding purchasing behavior (Mendoza & Abug, 2025). With such analysis, the business can quickly adjust its strategies when shifts in market preferences occur, enabling Qienzy to remain competitive amid the increasingly tight beverage UMKM market (Ramadan et al., 2025).

Digital Transformation Across All Operational and Marketing Aspects

Digital transformation plays a crucial role for Qienzy because it enables the business to optimize operational processes, ranging from sales recording and raw material inventory management to more accurate monitoring of daily demand (Tarigan et al., 2025b). With simple digital tools such as cashier applications or mobile-based inventory systems, the owner can work more efficiently without relying on manual methods that are prone to errors (Islamiati et al., 2025).

In the marketing aspect, the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook can significantly enhance business visibility because these platforms allow Qienzy to reach a wider audience with relatively low promotional costs (Sapthiarsyah & Junita, 2024). Engaging marketing content such as drink-making videos, daily promotions, or customer testimonials, can serve as an effective medium to build emotional closeness with the digital audience (Hidayatullah, 2025).

Digital transformation also includes the utilization of delivery services and food delivery applications, which allow customers to purchase Qienzy products without

visiting the location directly, expanding the market reach beyond the surrounding area of the stand (A'yuni et al., 2025). The business's presence on these platforms can increase sales volume, especially during peak hours or situations where customers prefer practical and fast services (Ariswanto et al., 2023).

In terms of customer communication and interaction, digitalization enables Qienzy to utilize automated chat features or scheduled messages to consistently provide product information, promotions, and operating hours to consumers (Hernawati et al., 2025). This communication strategy helps build a professional image while enhancing customer loyalty, as consumers feel they receive quick and responsive information services (Salma et al., 2025).

The implementation of digitalization is also essential for data analysis development, where Qienzy can identify sales patterns, peak purchasing times, and the most popular flavor variants to determine business strategies for the next period (A. R. Harahap & Lubis, 2025). By leveraging these data insights, the business owner can make more targeted decisions, ensuring that digital transformation becomes not merely a trend but a fundamental component in improving long-term business performance (Komalasari et al., 2025).

Human Resource Development and Organizational Strengthening

Recruiting members with specialized skills in information systems, management, and digital marketing is a crucial strategic step for SMEs aiming to remain competitive in the digital market. For businesses like Minuman Varian Qienzy, which operate in highly competitive markets such as Medan Pancing, establishing a strong organizational structure requires integrated talent management. The alignment between organizational operational needs and employee capabilities builds a solid foundation for sustainable business development and continuous innovation (Ohara et al., 2025). In the era of digital transformation, SMEs face significant challenges in attracting and retaining top talent, especially those with digital competencies and technological skills. A strategic recruitment approach that emphasizes digital competencies can substantially optimize the organization's adaptive capabilities and responsiveness to market dynamics (Sobari & Tussoleha Rony, 2025). Studies show that SMEs implementing competency-based recruitment experience enhanced operational efficiency and improved market positioning. For beverage SMEs operating in competitive markets, hiring candidates with information technology skills facilitates the implementation of digital systems for inventory management, customer relationship management, and data-driven decision-making.

Managerial skills represent another essential capability for reinforcing the organizational structure within SMEs. Efficient and targeted management encompasses several critical aspects, including strategic planning, optimal resource allocation, operational coordination structure, and structured performance measurement systems (Ismail et al., 2024). Organizations with professionally skilled management personnel tend to excel at identifying potential market opportunities, assessing business risks, and making precise strategic decisions. For Minuman Varian Qienzy, the involvement of individuals with strong managerial experience plays a key role in enhancing operational orderliness, increasing production productivity, and ensuring product quality consistency. Proficiency in digital marketing has become a highly sought-after expertise in the modern business context. In an era where consumers spend most of their time in

the digital realm, the ability to design effective digital marketing strategies is a key factor for business success.

Businesses that proactively optimize digital marketing observe a remarkable increase in market reach and sales volume. Online marketing strategies not only help SMEs expand brand awareness but also support face-to-face communication with consumers, understand market trends, and cultivate customer loyalty (Putri & Muanas, 2025). For beverage businesses like Minuman Varian Qienzy, digital marketing competencies support the development of engaging visual content, responsive and interactive social media campaigns, collaborations with local culinary influencers, and analysis of consumer behavior to develop products better aligned with market needs.

The collaboration of information technology, management, and digital marketing skills strengthens a more integrated and adaptive organizational foundation. SMEs that successfully combine these three capabilities within their organizational structure demonstrate superior innovation capacity and stronger market competitiveness (Sitorus et al., 2025). This integration fosters a work environment where each component supports and reinforces the other. Businesses like Minuman Varian Qienzy need to establish a recruitment strategy that goes beyond offering competitive compensation to emphasize corporate ethos, professional development prospects, and an innovation-friendly work environment. Young professionals with high digital proficiency tend to be attracted to organizations that provide opportunities for learning, growth, and participation in business transformation. Therefore, positioning Minuman Varian Qienzy as an SME undergoing digital transformation and offering space for innovative concepts can serve as a major attraction for potential candidates. Implementing an effective recruitment system also requires well-documented competency definitions for each relevant position.

For IT positions, required skills include knowledge of application development, data management, data protection, and expertise in coordinating various digital platforms (Ryantandi, 2022). Managerial roles require personnel with strategic thinking abilities, leadership skills, financial competence, and team and project coordination proficiency. Meanwhile, digital marketing roles require capabilities in content creation, social platform management, search engine optimization (SEO), marketing data analysis, and understanding consumer behavior. By detailing competencies, the selection process can be conducted objectively and systematically. Hiring individuals with digital expertise also plays a vital role in promoting equitable access to technology, a challenge often faced by traditional SMEs. One of the main challenges in implementing digital technology at the SME level is limited internal capacity and expertise. By hiring candidates accustomed to digital technology, SMEs can accelerate the organization's digital transformation. These new personnel not only excel technically but also act as transformation agents who help reshape organizational thinking (Harahap et al., 2025).

Overall, recruiting new members with expertise in information technology, management, and digital promotion constitutes an essential strategic investment for SMEs. For Minuman Varian Qienzy, this stage is not merely about increasing workforce numbers but is aimed at strengthening the organizational foundation and preparing to address future challenges. With an organizational structure reinforced by superior human resources, SMEs can implement innovation-focused business models, optimally manage digital technology, and ultimately achieve consistent business growth and enhanced competitiveness in the beverage industry segment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The results of this study show that Qienzy Variant Drinks MSME experiences stagnant business growth due to limited innovation, the absence of digital marketing, and manual operational systems that affect efficiency and competitiveness. The revitalization process can be strengthened by adopting digital tools, improving product variations, implementing a more modern and market-based business model, and recruiting individuals with expertise in management, information technology, and digital marketing to build a stronger organizational foundation. This study contributes to the understanding of how digital transformation and innovation can improve performance and create sustainability for micro beverage businesses facing modern market competition.

Future research is suggested to involve more respondents or compare similar MSMEs to provide broader insights. Researchers may also examine the financial performance impact after digital transformation implementation to strengthen empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of such strategies.

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