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EXECUTION DEFICIT OR STRUCTURAL MISMATCH? A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING (IN)EFFECTIVENESS AMONG MSMES SELLING HIGH-CONSIDERATION PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Social media marketing (SMM) is widely promoted as a low-cost route to market for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and a large empirical literature has examined whether it improves their performance. The results are uneven: some MSMEs grow rapidly through social platforms, while others invest for years with little return. The literature usually attributes such shortfalls to deficits on the owner's side, for example limited skills, budget, time, or organizational capability. This explanation implicitly assumes that social media works in the same way for every product. Consumer-behavior research, however, has long shown that purchase decisions differ in how much search, comparison, and verification they require. What remains unclear is whether the SMM–MSME literature has considered that some failures may reflect a structural mismatch between social media affordances and the demands of high-consideration purchasing, rather than a capability deficit; no prior review has coded product consideration as an explicit analytical variable. This systematic literature review therefore examines how the literature frames SMM (in)effectiveness, assesses how much evidence speaks directly to product–channel constraints, and develops a framework that distinguishes execution deficit from structural mismatch. Following PRISMA 2020 guidance, two Scopus search waves covering 2020–2026 yielded 739 records. After journal-quality screening (applied to the first wave), deduplication, and eligibility screening, we retained 210 studies and coded them across Adoption, Effectiveness, and Fit layers. Of the 189 studies whose explanatory framing could be assessed, 108 (57.1%) explain SMM outcomes through firm-side capabilities, resources, or readiness, 55 (29.1%) treat SMM as uniformly effective, only 19 (10.1%) rely on channel, sector, or institutional conditions, and 7 (3.7%) combine both. Only two of the 210 studies (0.95%) provide direct evidence of a product–channel constraint in a high-consideration context, and neither formally compares high- and low-consideration products. Integrating consumer decision-making theory, media affordance theory, and the strategic-fit perspective, the review proposes a two-factor framework (execution capability × product–channel fit) and four testable propositions. The contribution is not another capability factor but the repositioning of product consideration as a boundary condition that governs when SMM capability converts into market outcomes. For MSME support programs, the framework implies screening for product–channel fit before prescribing uniform social media training.

Keywords: *high-consideration products; MSMEs; social media marketing; structural mismatch; systematic literature review*

1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are major sources of employment, income, and poverty reduction in developing economies, as evidence from sub-Saharan Africa shows (Endris & Kassegn, 2022). For these firms, social media marketing (SMM) is commonly presented as an accessible route to digital markets: platforms are inexpensive to join, interactive, and compatible with existing routines. Cost-effectiveness, interactivity, and compatibility motivate MSME social media use (Odoom et al., 2017), and technological, organizational, and environmental factors drive adoption, which in turn is linked to better performance (Qalati et al., 2021). Outcomes, however, are uneven. Odoom et al. (2017) found that the performance benefits of social media usage were positive but erratic across product-based and service-based SMEs, and Cao and Weerawardena (2023) found no significant direct effect of social media on the marketing performance of B2B SMEs once brand-management capability was taken into account. Some MSMEs grow quickly through Instagram or TikTok, while others invest for years without a commensurate return.

The dominant explanation for this variation locates the problem in the firm. Reviews and empirical studies repeatedly identify limited digital literacy and skills, financing, infrastructure, and advertising costs as the main barriers to effective social media use (Lubis et al., 2025; Mahlangabeza & Twum-Darko, 2026), and cost has been found to depress SMM use among SMEs (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). Explanations of this kind treat under-performance as a deficit, that is, a condition that can in principle be corrected through training, technology subsidies, or mentoring. Policy recommendations follow the same logic: a recent state-of-the-art review of digital marketing among Indonesian creative MSMEs recommends strengthening digital literacy and education, entrepreneurship training, and government programs such as UMKM Go Digital (Lubis et al., 2025).

A second explanation has received far less attention: some SMM failures may arise not from limited capability but from a mismatch between the channel and the product. Consumer-behavior research has long distinguished routinized purchases from extensive problem solving, which involves broad search, comparison of alternatives, and slower decisions (Howard & Sheth, 1969), and goods whose quality can be judged from information before purchase from goods that must be experienced (Nelson, 1970). How consumers produce and use online information itself depends on product type (Dong et al., 2025). Research on cross-channel shopping shows that when consumers need to touch and inspect a product, or perceive a high risk in buying online, they tend to research online but complete the purchase offline (Arora & Sahney, 2018; Aw et al., 2021; Flavián et al., 2016). Products such as used cars, architectural services, and high-value jewelry require time, comparison, and gradually built trust that a single post, however well executed, cannot supply. For MSMEs selling such products, the relevant question is not only whether the owner manages the account competently but whether the channel can carry the purchase decision at all.

The distinction matters for both practice and research design. If underperformance shows a deficit, more and better training is the appropriate remedy; if it shows a structural mismatch, additional training will have limited effect, and a different channel strategy that blends online and offline touchpoints is required (Cai & Lo, 2020). Existing evidence already hints that channel effectiveness is contingent: B2B firms perceive social media as less effective and less important for relationship building than B2C firms (Iankova et al., 2019), and the use and impact of social media in SMEs vary with industry type (Wardati & Er,

2019). Yet prior reviews of SMM in SMEs classify studies by theme, research design, theory, country, and platform (Kanth & Prasad, 2023), map the field bibliometrically (Amiri et al., 2023), or consolidate barrier-and-remedy findings (Lubis et al., 2025). None of these reviews code the product's consideration level as an explicit analytical variable. The research gap is therefore twofold. Empirically, it is not known how much of the SMM–MSME literature contains evidence on product–channel constraints. Conceptually, the literature lacks a framework that separates execution deficits from structural mismatch.

This review addresses that gap. Its originality lies in (a) reading a systematically screened corpus of 210 Scopus-indexed studies (2020–2026) through product consideration rather than through sector, firm size, or country, and (b) integrating consumer decision-making theory, media affordance theory, and the strategic-fit perspective into a single boundary-condition argument. Three questions guide the review. SQ1: How does the literature frame the causes of SMM (in)effectiveness among MSMEs, particularly those selling high-consideration products? SQ2: To what extent does the literature already contain structural evidence of product–channel constraints that it does not theorize as such? SQ3: What conceptual framework can distinguish deficit-based failure from structural mismatch? Accordingly, this study attempts to systematically map dominant framing patterns in the literature, establish how scarce consideration-specific evidence is, and propose a testable deficit–structural framework with direct implications related to the design of MSME support programs.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Review Design and Search Strategy

This study is a systematic literature review (SLR) reported in line with the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). It is a qualitative, interpretive synthesis rather than a quantitative associative design: the unit of analysis is the published study, the population of interest is Scopus-indexed journal articles on social media marketing in MSMEs published between 2020 and 2026, and the analysis consists of structured coding followed by thematic synthesis. The review is bounded by design to one database (Scopus), English-language journal articles, and the 2020–2026 publication window.

We ran searches in two waves on the same database. The first wave returned 282 records; the second, run later to capture newly indexed work, returned 457 records, for a total of 739 records processed. The search combined two concept blocks, social media marketing and MSMEs/SMEs; we assessed relevance to marketing effectiveness or performance at the screening stage rather than in the string. The original execution log was not retained, so the string below was reconstructed from the protocol's operational definitions and is reported to allow replication; because Scopus indexing changes continuously, re-running it is not expected to reproduce the historical counts exactly:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (("social media marketing" OR "social media" OR "SMM") AND ("SME" OR "SMEs" OR "small and medium enterprise*" OR "small business*" OR "micro enterprise*" OR "MSME*" OR "UMKM")) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2027

Journal-quality screening for the first wave used the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) Best Quartile 2025 dataset, accessed on 18 July 2026. We completed eligibility screening for the first wave on 19 July 2026. We completed processing for the second wave (deduplication, layer coding, and recoding the first-wave corpus to the same scheme) on 20 July 2026.

2.2 Eligibility Criteria

We applied eligibility criteria at the screening stage rather than building them into the search string. They are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	Studies of MSMEs/SMEs, or direct structural comparisons with that population	"SME" denotes something other than an enterprise (e.g., social media engagement, subject-matter expert)
Focus	SMM evidence is focal or analytically separable from aggregate digital marketing	Social media used only to recruit respondents or distribute questionnaires; digital marketing reported only as an aggregate with no separable social media evidence
Outcome	Market-facing outcomes (engagement, sales, performance, resilience) or structural boundaries relevant to the research questions	Purely internal, non-marketing use of social media with no market-facing outcome
Source	English-language, Scopus-indexed journal articles published 2020–2026	Duplicates (by normalized title and/or DOI); for Wave 1, journals outside SJR Q1–Q2

Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

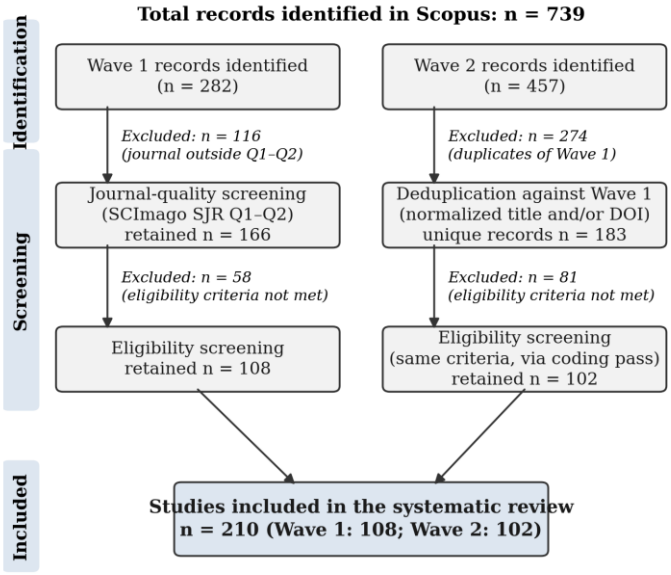
2.3 Screening, Quality Assessment, and Deduplication

We screened records at the journal level before article-level screening. We matched each source journal to its SJR Best Quartile 2025 classification, and only articles from Q1–Q2 journals proceeded. This step retained 166 records and excluded 116. Eligibility screening then removed a further 58 records, including two in which "SME" did not refer to enterprises. This error illustrates how this shared three-letter abbreviation can mislead automated retrieval. The first wave thus contributed 108 studies.

We deduplicated second-wave records against all 282 first-wave records by normalized title (removing differences in capitalization, punctuation, and spacing) and/or DOI. Of the 457 second-wave records, 274 matched first-wave records and were removed, leaving 183 unique records; we found no internal duplicates within the second wave. We applied the same eligibility criteria to these 183 records during the coding pass, and included 102. The second wave did not pass through a separate journal-quartile gate. The final corpus of 210 studies (108 + 102) should therefore not be described as having passed an SJR Q1–Q2 filter in its entirety; this asymmetry between waves is reported as a limitation. Figure 1 shows the selection flow.

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Figure 1 PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Two-Wave Study Selection



Note: the SJR quartile gate was applied to Wave 1 only; this asymmetry is reported as a limitation.

Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

2.4 Data Extraction and Coding

We coded each included study on analytical layers derived from the research questions (Table 2). Studies with substantive evidence on two or more of the three core layers were coded as Multiple. A fourth layer, Attribution (whether trust, credibility, or claims about the focal MSME or product can be verified), was coded in the wider project but is bracketed out of the analytic frame here because it addresses trust and source-verification mechanisms rather than the deficit-versus-mismatch contrast; it is retained for a companion study.

The Fit layer is deliberately broad: it covers general channel alignment as well as the narrower question of whether evidence is disaggregated by product consideration. As a consequence, some Fit-coded studies discuss channel alignment without separating data by consideration level. Because the two carry different evidentiary weight for SQ2, the distinction between "Fit in general" and "consideration-disaggregated evidence" is tracked explicitly in the results. In addition, we assigned each study one explanatory-framing code to answer SQ1, based on how it accounts for SMM outcomes or their absence (Table 3). We assigned the code from the study-level evidence notes and abstracts recorded in the audit matrix rather than from full texts, which we acknowledge as a limitation. An earlier, narrower classification of 117 first-wave records, made before the final corpus was assembled, is reported in the supplementary material for audit purposes only and is not used for the results.

Table 2 Coding Scheme

Layer	Definition	Role in this review
Adoption	Whether and why MSMEs adopt, intend to use, or discontinue SMM	Core
Effectiveness	Outcomes attributed to SMM and how they are measured	Core
Fit	Alignment among platform affordances, content format, audience, and product or purchase requirements	Core; closest operationalization of structural mismatch
Multiple	Substantive evidence on two or more core layers	Core
Attribution	Trust, credibility, and verifiability of claims about the focal MSME or product	Coded, but bracketed out of this analysis

Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

Table 3 Explanatory-Framing Codes Applied to the 210 Studies

Code	Definition
Capability framing	Outcomes or adoption explained by firm-side factors: skills, resources, readiness, orientation, organizational capabilities, adoption determinants (e.g., TOE, TAM, UTAUT), or execution practices
Uniform-effect framing	SMM presented as effective without conditioning the effect on firm, product, or context
Structural/contextual framing	Outcomes conditioned on product, channel or platform, sector, or institutional and market context
Mixed	Both firm-side and structural factors carry the explanation
Not assessable	Reviews, method papers, or descriptive studies without an explanatory claim about SMM (in)effectiveness

Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

2.5 Coding Reliability

A single researcher performed the coding, so no Cohen's kappa or other inter-rater statistic can be reported. Reliability was addressed through a second reading of all coded records by the same researcher at a later point in time, which corrected an earlier over-count of consideration-disaggregated studies (documented in the supplementary material) but cannot rule out a consistent individual bias. We excluded supplementary coding of 47 records provided by an external collaborator after cross-checking showed it repeatedly conflated firm-size disaggregation with consideration-level disaggregation. The synthesis should therefore be read as a single-coder analysis with an internal audit. A study-level

evidence matrix for all 210 records, with layer codes, framing codes, and short evidence notes, is provided as supplementary material.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Conceptual Foundations

Research on SMM in MSMEs has developed along two streams that rarely meet. The first concerns adoption: why some MSMEs use social media, and others do not, and which technological, organizational, and environmental aspects drive or hinder adoption (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020; Qalati et al., 2021). The second concerns effectiveness: whether social media use is associated with sales, customer engagement, or business performance (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023; Ukshini et al., 2025). Both streams usually treat the MSME as a homogeneous unit of analysis and seldom ask whether the type of product sold shapes the outcome. This omission has a methodological origin. Bibliographic and business databases categorize firms by sector, size, and location rather than by the complexity of the purchase decision their products require, and existing reviews inherit these categories (Amiri et al., 2023; Kanth & Prasad, 2023). Consideration level is therefore rarely operationalized, even when it is conceptually relevant.

This review rests on three theoretical lenses, chosen to interlock rather than accumulate. The first explains why purchase processes differ across products (Howard & Sheth, 1969). The second explains what a channel can and cannot support (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). The third provides the logic that links the two to predict effectiveness (Venkatraman, 1989). Structural mismatch, the central concept of this article, emerges from integrating the three lenses rather than as a free-standing construct.

Lens 1: high-consideration decision-making. Howard and Sheth (1969) distinguish three levels of consumer decision process: extensive problem solving (broad information search, comparison of many alternatives, slower decisions), limited problem solving (moderate search with fairly clear criteria), and routinized response behavior (near-automatic choice based on settled preferences). Information economics also distinguishes between search goods, whose quality can be assessed before purchase, and experience goods, whose quality can be judged only through use (Nelson, 1970). High-consideration purchasing, as used here, refers to the extensive end of the Howard–Sheth spectrum, in which buyers actively seek information, compare options, and defer the decision until they feel sufficiently certain.

Consideration should not be equated with involvement, although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Involvement, as operationalized in Zaichkowsky's (1985) Personal Involvement Inventory, is a psychological construct: the degree to which a product is perceived as personally relevant given the consumer's needs, values, and interests. Involvement may be high for inexpensive, routinely purchased products; a coffee fan may be strongly attached to one brand while buying it every week without renewed deliberation. Consideration, by contrast, characterizes the decision process itself. The two constructs commonly correlate, but they are not identical: compulsory vehicle insurance is rarely felt to be personally relevant, yet it calls for careful comparison of premiums and coverage, whereas high personal involvement does not automatically produce an extended decision process at each repeat purchase. This review therefore uses consideration (Howard & Sheth,

1969) as its central construct, because consideration sets the information and verification demands a marketing channel must meet; involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1985) is treated as a possible antecedent of consideration, not a synonym.

Lens 2: media affordances. The concept of affordance originates in ecological psychology, where it denotes the possibilities for action that an environment offers an actor (Gibson, 1979). Treem and Leonardi (2013) applied the concept to social media. They identified four affordances that distinguish it from other communication technologies: visibility (the extent to which others can observe information and interactions), editability (the extent to which content can be crafted and revised), persistence (the extent to which content remains available and retrievable), and association (the extent to which the platform connects people, content, and communities). These affordances favor fast, lightweight, visually driven interaction. Visibility and association accelerate the spread of social recommendations; editability enables aesthetically appealing content to be produced quickly; persistence keeps older posts discoverable by new prospects. None of the four, however, is designed to fulfill the specific needs of high-consideration decisions: physical verification, detailed specification comparison, or face-to-face interaction that develops trust gradually. Consumer research supports this reading: the need to touch the product, better offline after-sales service, and perceived online purchase risk are among the factors that move consumers from online research to offline purchase (Arora & Sahney, 2018). An affordance is not a prohibition, since a platform can be used for purposes it does not natively support. Still, the gap between what the channel natively supports and what a high-consideration buyer needs is the seed of structural mismatch.

Lens 3: contingency and fit. Contingency theory holds that no single structure or strategy is universally superior and that effectiveness depends on the match between an organization's choices and its conditions (Donaldson, 2001; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Venkatraman (1989) described several ways to operationalize fit in strategy research; one, fit as matching, holds that outcomes are optimal when two elements correspond, regardless of how well either is executed on its own. This perspective provides the review's binding logic. Consideration (Lens 1) defines the decision demands a purchase imposes; media affordances (Lens 2) define what a channel natively supports; fit as matching (Lens 3) supplies the criterion for evaluating the pair. SMM effectiveness should be high when decision demands and channel affordances match and low when they do not, regardless of how skillfully the MSME executes its content. Structural mismatch is thus the condition in which high consideration demands meet a channel whose affordances suit low-consideration interaction. Contingency logic predicts that this non-fit will suppress effectiveness regardless of the MSME's execution capability.

3.2 Corpus Characteristics

Publication years concentrate in 2021–2025 (2020: 19; 2021: 34; 2022: 25; 2023: 38; 2024: 33; 2025: 45; 2026: 16 studies). By layer, 99 studies (47.1%) were coded as Multiple, 56 (26.7%) as Effectiveness, 39 (18.6%) as Adoption, 14 (6.7%) as Fit, and 2 (1.0%) as Attribution. These counts describe topical focus, not explanatory framing: because Fit is defined more broadly than consideration, a Fit-coded study may still explain its findings using a capability narrative.

3.3 SQ1: How the Literature Frames SMM (In)Effectiveness

Capability framing dominates the corpus. Of the 210 studies, 21 were not assessable. Of the remaining 189, 108 (57.1%) explain SMM outcomes through firm-side capabilities, resources, skills, or capacity; 55 (29.1%) treat SMM as uniformly effective and do not condition the effect at all; 19 (10.1%) invoke channel, sector, or institutional conditions, mostly sector or setting rather than the product (e.g., Olasanmi et al., 2023); and 7 (3.7%) combine capability and structural explanations. Taken together, 163 studies (86.2%) either locate the explanation inside the firm or assume that none is needed. The pattern holds in both waves (Wave 1: 55 capability, 36 uniform-effect, 7 structural; Wave 2: 53, 19, and 12). The studies discussed below illustrate the capability code across designs; the full study-level coding is provided in the supplementary material. Mahlangabeza and Twum-Darko (2026) find that South African retail MSMEs use social media and WhatsApp deliberately yet attribute shortfalls to skills, financing, infrastructure, and digital security. Cao and Weerawardena (2023), studying 143 UK B2B SMEs with tests for common-method bias and endogeneity, report no significant direct effect of social media on marketing performance ($\beta = 0.08$) and an indirect effect through brand-management capability ($\beta = 0.22$); the null direct effect is framed as a capability gap, not as a possible structural difference between B2B and B2C channel needs.

Reporting practices reinforce the pattern. Mushi (2024) reports $\beta = -0.180$ for aggregate digital marketing strategy (Table 12 of that study) yet interprets digital marketing as a positive driver of performance, and the meta-analysis by Ukshini et al. (2025), pooling 56 primary studies, reports $r = 0.3715$ in its results and abstract and $r = 0.3673$ in its conclusion. Such slips point to a field in which a positive result is the expected default rather than to deliberate misrepresentation. Qualitative and mixed-method studies reach the same place with different vocabulary: Gorostidi-Martinez et al. (2024) attribute SME social media performance during a black-swan crisis to speed, flexibility, authenticity, and targeting; Kemp et al. (2021) trace storytelling content through personal connection to social-commerce sales without asking whether product type limits that chain; and Meier and Peters (2023) explain limited engagement among 20 German SMEs through structuration and managerial sensemaking.

3.4 SQ2: Structural Evidence that Remains Untheorized

Two of the 210 studies (0.95%) provide direct evidence of a product–channel constraint in a high-consideration context. Baldivia and Chowdhury (2025) show that digital channels extend the reach of small Australian retailers without removing the need for tactile experience and physical touchpoints. Husarova (2026) characterizes jewelry as a high-value, high-consideration, high-trust product and finds channel integration and augmented reality more closely associated with trust, loyalty, and repeat purchase than stand-alone tools, including social media. Both document a constraint that a deficit narrative would not predict, but neither is a formal high-versus-low comparison.

Two further corpus studies point the same way without testing consideration. They are not counted in that figure: social media's fast, informal feedback underserves creative small businesses whose products need in-depth critique (Kotturi et al., 2021), and Gen Z buyers seeking professional advice for important purchases visit physical stores more, whereas high

social media engagement raises social-commerce intention (Stoica & Hickman, 2024). Among luxury buyers, the desire to interact physically with products drives online searching and offline buying, moderated by perceived online risk (Lavuri & Thaichon, 2026). The scarcity shows that consideration is rarely operationalized as a boundary condition; it does not show that structural mismatch is more common than execution deficit.

3.5 Comparison with Prior Literature

The findings can be positioned against four bodies of earlier work.

Capability-mediation models of SMM performance. The dominance of capability explanations found for SQ1 is consistent with the adoption and performance models that support much of the field. TOE-based studies explain adoption and performance through technological, organizational, and environmental aspects (Qalati et al., 2021); TAM/UTAUT-based work identifies perceived usefulness, ease of use, and cost as the key levers (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020); and performance effects are often found to run through brand-management or other organizational capabilities (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023). This review does not contradict these conclusions. It differs in interpretation: where prior studies treat an absent or indirect effect as a capability yet to be built, the present synthesis argues that the same pattern is equally compatible with a product–channel boundary that capability alone cannot cross.

Heterogeneity by product, business model, and sector. Several earlier studies have observed that SMM effects differ across firm types, although none framed the difference in terms of purchase consideration. Odoom et al. (2017) found that social media benefits were erratic across product-based and service-based SMEs; Iankova et al. (2019) found that B2B firms perceive social media as less effective than B2C, mixed, and B2B2C firms do; Wardati and Er (2019) concluded that social media use depends on industry type; and Ukshini et al. (2025) report larger performance gains for service firms than for manufacturing firms. These outcomes support the boundary condition argument, but because they are coded as sector or business-model moderators, they cannot separate consideration from the other attributes that sectors bundle together. The present review extends this line of work by proposing consideration as the underlying dimension that such sector differences may partly proxy.

Consumer cross-channel behavior. The product–channel constraints found in Baldivia and Chowdhury (2025) and Husarova (2026) mirror demand-side consumer research. Webrooming (searching online and buying offline) is prompted by the need for touch, the need for interaction with salespeople, and perceived online risk, and product category moderates several of these effects (Arora & Sahney, 2018; Aw et al., 2021); combining online search with offline purchase raises consumers' choice confidence (Flavián et al., 2016); and the helpfulness of online reviews differs across search, experience, and credence goods (Dong et al., 2025). Omnichannel research likewise treats channels as complementary rather than substitutable (Cai & Lo, 2020). The SMM–MSME literature has largely not imported these conclusions, which helps explain why constraints that consumer researchers take for granted appear, on the supply side, as isolated case findings.

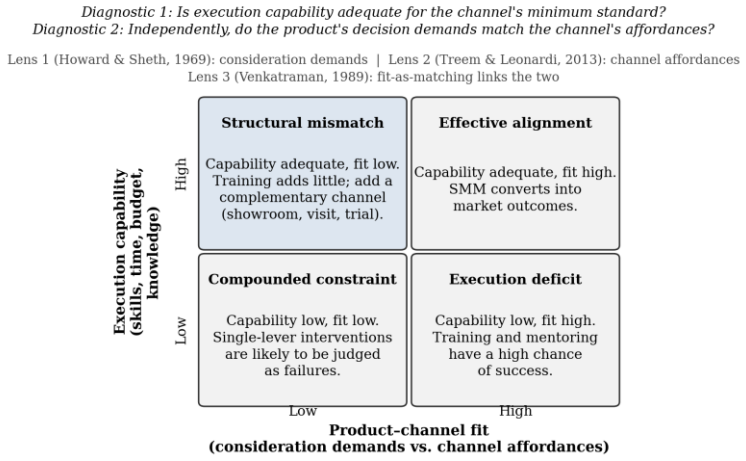
Earlier reviews of SMM in SMEs. A recent review concluded that the main obstacles are uneven digital literacy, advertising costs, and infrastructure shortcomings, and recommended strengthening digital literacy, training, and government facilitation (Lubis et al., 2025). Other reviews organized the field by theme, design, theory, country, and platform

(Kanth & Prasad, 2023) or by bibliometric structure (Amiri et al., 2023). The present review reaches a different conclusion from a comparable evidence base because it codes a variable these reviews did not: when consideration is made explicit, the near-absence of product-level evidence becomes visible, and the recommendation shifts from uniform training to diagnosis before intervention.

3.6 SQ3: A Framework Distinguishing Execution Deficit from Structural Mismatch

The framework is conceptual, not a validated model. It combines consideration as decision demand (Howard & Sheth, 1969), affordances as channel capacity (Treem & Leonardi, 2013), and fit as the evaluative logic (Venkatraman, 1989) into two diagnostic questions. Is the MSME's execution capability (skills, time, budget, knowledge) adequate for the channel? And, independently, does the product's character (consideration level, requirement for physical or face-to-face verification, purchase cycle) match the channel's affordances?

Figure 2 Proposed Framework: Execution Capability × Product–Channel Fit



Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

Crossing the answers yields four situations (Figure 2). High capability with high fit gives effective alignment; low capability with high fit gives an execution deficit that training can correct, the case most studies treat as universal; high capability with low fit gives structural mismatch, where a complementary channel is needed (Baldivia & Chowdhury, 2025); and low values on both compound the problem. The high-capability, low-fit cell matters most because it is the easiest to misdiagnose: a used-car MSME that struggles on social media may not lack account skills; its buyers may simply need to inspect the car. For primary research, consideration can be operationalized in three ways: as a decision-process measure (extent of search, number of alternatives compared, and time to decision), as proxies such as price relative to income, purchase frequency, and perceived purchase risk, or as an ex ante product classification into search, experience, and credence goods (Chen et al., 2021; Dong et al., 2025; Nelson, 1970). Four testable but untested propositions follow:

P1: Among MSMEs with comparable execution capability, SMM effectiveness is lower for products with high consideration than for products with low consideration.
P2: Product–channel fit moderates the capability–outcome relationship: capability-building interventions such as content or account-management training raise SMM outcomes when fit is high, but their marginal returns are capped when fit is low.
P3: High-consideration products increase the need for complementary channels (face-to-face contact, physical showrooms, third-party verification) where social media affordances cannot meet verification and comparison demands.
P4: The effect of consumer involvement on SMM effectiveness operates through the consideration level of the decision process rather than directly; high involvement without an extended decision process does not by itself produce structural mismatch.

P3 and P4 are consistent with consumer evidence that the need for personal interaction strengthens the move from online search to offline purchase (Yadav et al., 2024) and that product involvement is the core condition in every configuration leading to webrooming (Aw, 2020).

3.7 Theoretical, Methodological, and Applied Implications

Theoretically, the review treats product decision demands as a boundary condition rather than a control variable. Hence, consideration belongs among the structural variables of SMM–MSME research alongside firm size and sector. Methodologically, reviews and primary studies should code consideration from the outset; data-driven measures of product type and purchase uncertainty offer one route (Chen et al., 2021). Practically, MSME support programs should screen for product–channel fit before prescribing uniform SMM training: where a product requires physical verification, extended comparison, or face-to-face contact, support for complementary channels is likely to pay off better than more content training.

4. CONCLUSION

This review of 210 studies finds that capability-based and uniform-effect framings account for 86.2% of the assessable studies on SMM among MSMEs, even though direct evidence of product–channel mismatch is scarce: only 2 of 210 studies (0.95%) document such a constraint in a high-consideration context, and neither formally compares high- and low-consideration products. The contribution repositions product consideration as a boundary condition on the link between SMM capability and market outcomes, supported by a two-factor framework and four propositions. The claim is bounded: the review does not argue that social media is unsuited to high-consideration products, only that structural mismatch becomes more likely when a purchase requires verification, comparison, or physical interaction that the focal channel cannot provide; social media can still carry awareness and reach if a complementary channel supplies the rest.

Limitations consist of the single database and English-language scope, a quartile gate applied to the first wave only, single-coder analysis without an inter-rater statistic, framing codes assigned from evidence notes and abstracts rather than full texts, and the framework's untested status. Because the corpus is global and contains few Indonesian studies, the practical consequences address MSME support programs in general rather than any single national scheme. Upcoming research should measure or manipulate consideration directly, test the four propositions, replicate the framework across areas, and examine the bracketed Attribution layer separately.

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