

Moderate Resistance in the Age of Algorithm: How Indonesian SME Influencers Negotiate Digital Structural Violence on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the resistance practices of local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (SME) influencers in Indonesia who navigate structural violence embedded within social media, driven by developmentalist digital transformation policies. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach and drawing on Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* and Foucault's concept of power, the research uncovers how these influencers' worldviews and ethical commitments diverge from the dominant norms of digital platforms. Through in-depth interviews and participatory observations with seven informants in Malang, Indonesia, data were analyzed using the van Kaam method. The findings reveal that SME influencers embrace values such as "inclusive sustainability" and "reflective humanism," which contrast with the prevailing social media logic marked by digital exhibitionism and performative validation. Instead of abandoning these platforms, they enact "moderate resistance," a nuanced negotiation of platform constraints through strategies of authenticity, humor, and inclusivity. This resistance allows them to maintain relative autonomy while still engaging with algorithmic systems. The study introduces moderate resistance as a novel conceptual bridge linking Bourdieu's structuralist insights with Foucault's analysis of power, offering a critique of overly celebratory discourses around SME digitalization. It also challenges the predominance of positivist approaches in SME research by presenting an alternative, critical framework rooted in emancipation and reflexivity. Limitations of the study include its localized focus and the epistemological tension between phenomenology and structuralist theory. Future research should examine how moderate resistance manifests in other Global South contexts with similar digital policy frameworks.

Keywords: *Moderate resistance, SME, social media, digitalization, structural violence.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's digital transformation agenda for micro, small, and medium enterprises (SMEs) has accelerated since the 2019 launch of the "SME Go Digital" initiative. By mid-2024, the government reported 27 million of 64.2 million SMEs had digitalized (Kemenpan, 2024). Yet this number is problematic if digitalization is defined only as online presence, neglecting organizational capability, cultural readiness, and financial integration (Cheng et al., 2024; Tursanurohmad et al., 2023). The lack of official data on SME resilience and sustainability post-digitalization further complicates the issue.

Various studies indicate that many SMEs in Indonesia have yet to adequately adopt technology, facing barriers such as digital literacy, infrastructure disparities, and financial constraints (Aviyanti & Widyastuti, 2024; Hariyanti & Kristanti, 2024). Ironically, even access

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to FinTech has, in some cases, exacerbated their financial conditions (Novianto, 2024; Utami, 2023). In the context of developing countries, this reflects a technocratic developmentalist policy model, which tends to be top-down and pursues economic growth through digitalization without considering social and structural readiness (Bayeh, 2019; Vaz & de Moraes, 2022). Program success is measured by pseudo-quantification, such as the number of e-commerce or social media platform accounts, which certainly does not guarantee genuine empowerment for SME actors in Indonesia.

Critiques of technocratic-developmental policies are increasingly salient given Indonesia's reliance on foreign investment to build its digital ecosystem. By the second quarter of 2024, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) totaled Rp. 217.3 trillion, constituting 50.7% of total investment, predominantly from Singapore, Hong Kong, and China (Yonathan, 2024). The principal e-commerce platforms Shopee, Lazada, and Tokopedia (now 75.01% owned by ByteDance) are foreign-owned, despite their widespread use among SMEs and consumers. Consequently, local SMEs remain confined to the informal sector and gig economy, exposed to risks such as predatory pricing and a 12% VAT on e-commerce transactions (Maharatih, 2019; Setiawan & Gonsaga, 2025).

On the other hand, digitalization has reinforced a consumerist culture in society through social media, which facilitates lifestyles based on social validation and digital exhibitionism (Cyrklaff-Gorczyca, 2022). Users, including SMEs, participate in what Fuchs, (2023) and Zuboff (2019) described as "surveillance capitalism," a system in which their data and activities are monetized without their awareness, effectively making them unpaid labor within the digital ecosystem. Consequently, the SME Go Digital program has the potential to reproduce forms of structural violence, that is, systemic injustice that arises without direct physical violence (Galtung, 1969, 1971).

However, within this landscape marked by pervasive structural violence, initial observations reveal a phenomenon in which local SME actors adopt digital strategies effectively, actively, and reflectively, becoming influencers who leverage social media to build personal brands and communities. They do not merely serve as passive partners of digital platforms but emerge as creative actors producing content that articulates values of independence, communal solidarity, and resistance to dominant, capitalistic, exploitative narratives. In this context, "SME influencers" refers to small business actors who position themselves as content creators with a significant follower base and high engagement rates, while also cultivating distinctive relationships with their audiences (Duffy, 2020).

Although a substantial body of literature has examined various forms of digital inequality and algorithmic power as new manifestations of structural violence within platform capitalism – as discussed above – such studies tend to focus primarily on the macro level, namely the political-economic structures and operational logics of platforms. In contrast, the responses of micro-level actors, particularly MSMEs that simultaneously function as influencers, remain relatively underexplored conceptually. There is still limited research highlighting the agency of these "grassroots" actors in confronting platform power and capital-driven digitalization narratives. Yet this group occupies an ambivalent position: they are neither fully "passive victims" of algorithms, nor do they possess sufficient structural power to openly challenge platforms – consistent with Foucault (1978, pp. 95–96) postulate that where there is power, there is resistance.

Academically, this group is significant because it operates at the intersection of mainstream creative economy discourse, “digital entrepreneurship,” and platform power structures, thereby necessitating an analysis of how resistance operates against power within everyday practices (social practices) in digital spaces – particularly social media. Accordingly, this study specifically examines Indonesian MSME actors who utilize social media both as a promotional space and as a site of negotiation with algorithmic logic – referred to in this study as “MSME influencers.” In this regard, the study advances the following central research question: “How can the social practices of local MSME influencers on social media be interpreted as forms of emancipation against the structural violence embedded in the dominant digitalization narrative of MSMEs in Indonesia?”

To address this question, “social practice” is conceptualized within Bourdieu’s framework, which posits that action emerges from *habitus* and from unrecognized social structures. Collective and repetitive actions are shaped not only by explicit rules (objective structures), but also by internalized *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1985, 1990b, p. 53). *Habitus* itself consists of values, beliefs, and worldviews formed through experience and learning that shape action (Bourdieu, 2005). Emancipatory social practice will be understood inductively; however, it is clear that acts of resistance constitute an integral part of any emancipatory endeavor. This follows Foucault’s assertion that resistance is always present wherever power operates. Resistance does not exist outside power; rather, it is directly constitutive of power relations (Foucault, 1978, pp. 95–96). Resistance refers to actions, attitudes, or social practices that oppose, critique, or seek to transform dominant structures, norms, values, or power relations within society (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). In this sense, resistance may serve as the foundation of emancipatory practices capable of destabilizing dominant structures. Accordingly, this study will explore:

- How do the values, norms, beliefs, and worldviews held by SME influencers serve as the foundation for their behavior and actions within the reality of social media?
- How do the actions, attitudes, or social practices of local SME influencers oppose, critique, or seek to transform the dominant structures, norms, values, or forms of power within the reality of social media?

This study adopts a qualitative-phenomenological approach, applying critical theory and combining Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus* and field with Foucault’s theory of power and resistance. It critically examines SME digitalization as a complex, non-neutral process, analyzes local agencies in the global digital ecosystem, and presents new data on SME resistance via social media. The research aims to expand understanding of structural violence and highlight grassroots emancipatory practices, encouraging critical reflection on SME digitalization policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Academic studies on the digital transformation of SMEs in developing countries, particularly Indonesia, remain largely confined to prescriptive and normative approaches. Between 2021 and 2024, more than 21,400 Indonesian-language publications reproduced an uncritical optimism toward “digital marketing,” lacking critical reflection. Digitalization is often reduced to a technical solution, such as social media training, without addressing the structural roots of SME challenges (Wati et al., 2022; Wulandari et al., 2022). Technology is positioned as an end in itself, rather than as a field of power relations, as explored in studies by Alvian et al. (2023), Izzalqurny et al. (2023), and Saputra and Winarno (2024).

This phenomenon also characterizes the ASEAN region. Works by Minh et al. (2024) also with Vuttichat and Patchara (2023) normalize the jargon of “efficiency” and “innovation” without questioning who ultimately benefits from these processes. The ASEAN Digital Integration Framework reveals a bias toward data liberalization, opening the door to data extraction by global corporations such as Google, Meta, and Alibaba (ASEAN, 2020). Consequently, the ASEAN literature reproduces technological positivism, neglecting the complexities of political economy, digital power relations, and threats to data sovereignty.

Critical theory offers a fundamental alternative. Heidegger (1977, pp. 16–17, 21–24) reject the neutrality of technology, asserting that modern technology, through the concept of “*gestell*,” transforms humans into “standing-reserve.” The Frankfurt School, Horkheimer and Adorno (1987/2002, pp. 2–6) demonstrates that technology, rather than liberating, in fact deepens the dominance of capitalism and human alienation. Habermas (1971) reveals how technocratic rationality supplants the deliberative space of politics with market logic. Technology does not stand alone; it is both shaped by and shapes the structures of global capitalist domination.

In recent developments, the concept of surveillance capitalism, Zuboff (2019, pp. 12, 17–20) shows that human experience is now extracted and predicted for the profit of digital corporations. Fuchs (2023, p. 10, 16, 102–118) extends this critique to the concept of “free labor” on platforms, while Mejias and Couldry (2024) highlight data colonialism as a new form of digital conquest. Dawson (2023) and Lyon (2022) add that algorithms reinforce social hierarchies based on class, race, and gender. Digital culture, driven by algorithms, encourages show-off behavior, social validation, and performativity (Samala & Rawas, 2024; Sun et al., 2024). This digital dominance operates as structural violence without physical force (Galtung, 1969, 1971), regulating users’ thoughts and behaviors. However, as Foucault (1978, pp. 95–96) asserts that within power lies the potential for resistance, as expressed by Giddens (2007, pp. 14–16), and that social agencies emerge through the fissures of dominant structures, including within digital practices.

Critical theory perspectives have, to some extent, been employed to analyze the power relations of digital capitalism and algorithmic governance in relation to the small economy or MSMEs in developing countries. This is reflected in Faria and Whitesell (2020), who examine how global digital retail platforms shape postcolonial relations and uneven power dynamics within urban retail ecosystems in East Africa, and the study by Mohanty and Mishra (2020), which identifies gender bias in digital entrepreneurship discourse affecting women MSME entrepreneurs in Nigeria. In India, Ghosh (2022) provides a critical analysis of how digitally oriented formalization has reconfigured power relations and intensified vulnerabilities within the informal sector, particularly among MSMEs. In a similar vein, Mukherjee and Mukherjee (2022) reveal that integrating MSMEs into Global Value Chains (GVCs) through digital platforms generates micro-level consequences, including export dependency, policy promise expectations, and asymmetrical bargaining power.

However, critical analyses of MSME digitalization practices in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, remain relatively limited. Several studies on MSME digitalization in Indonesia tend to focus on technical aspects of technology adoption, digital literacy, and economic or digital capacity enhancement, yet rarely situate these within a framework of power relations, structural platform violence, or critical theory perspectives. This tendency is evident in several of the publications mentioned earlier, which are largely typical in orientation. In the context of Indonesia’s digital economy – characterized by the dominance

of global platforms and inequalities in digital–algorithmic access – the promotional and content curation practices of MSME actors cannot be detached from the logic of power that structures visibility, legitimacy, and the distribution of economic opportunities.

It is precisely here that the relevance of critical theory in this study lies, namely in its capacity to explain how power operates through algorithmic structures – permeating dominant norms as structuring forces within social media practices – while simultaneously functioning as mechanisms of inequality production. This perspective makes visible how “small economy” subjects (MSMEs) negotiate their positions within such structures. Accordingly, this study also employs Bourdieu’s framework (1985, 1990, 2013) to understand the “social practices” of MSME actors as the outcome of the dialectic between *habitus* and the field of social media. Within this theoretical framework, MSME influencers are assumed not merely to be marketing actors but also agents who enact resistance by constructing alternative narratives through content production. This concept serves as the conceptual framework for the present study, as illustrated in Figure 1.

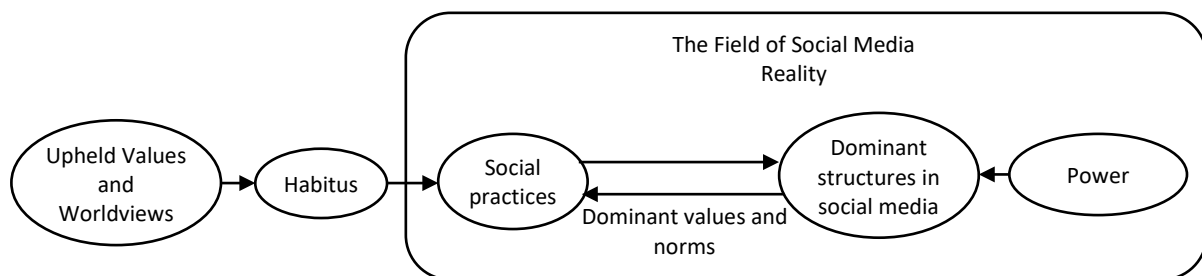


Figure 1. Conceptual framework
 Source: Author’s synthesis

The conceptual framework may be read as follows: first, on the one hand, MSME influencers act (engage in social practices) within the framework of their *habitus*, grounded in values, beliefs, and worldviews acquired through their lived experiences and lifelong learning. Second, on the other hand, social media platforms are understood as a field of social media reality that, through the power structures operating behind them, produce dominant structures in the form of values and norms via algorithmic mechanisms. This, in turn, generates forms of digital structural violence. Yet these values and norms are also internalized within the *habitus* and digital entrepreneurial practices of MSME actors operating within the field of social media reality. The gap between the values, beliefs, and worldviews of the dominant social media structure and the everyday practices of MSME influencers will be analyzed as a form of negotiation with that structure – a form of resistance or emancipatory effort.

From this conceptual relationship, the study seeks to uncover (and develop) a concept of resistance that does not necessarily manifest in open confrontation, but rather as an adaptive strategy that remains within the boundaries of algorithmic structures on social media. This framework enables the research to bridge the structural diagnosis of digital inequality with the concrete practices of Indonesian MSME actors, who are simultaneously constrained and agentic. Thus, in turn, this study also aims to extend Bourdieu’s generative structuralism into contemporary digital realities, in line with Mears (2023), Merisalo and Makkonen (2022), Ragnedda (2019), Ragnedda and Ruiu (2017), and Yang (2023), while simultaneously challenging the dominance of positivism in the literature on MSME digitalization in developing countries within the ASEAN region.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach grounded in a critical theory worldview, as articulated by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 32). Ontologically, it assumes that the digital reality of MSMEs is shaped by the hegemony of digital platforms as a form of structural violence. Epistemologically, the study aims to understand the social practices of MSME actors within digital spaces, while its axiological stance emphasizes the diversity of values from a community perspective. Methodologically, the research analyzes the potential for social resistance to platform power, drawing on Foucault's concepts of power and resistance. A phenomenological design is used to explore the subjective experiences of SME actors who also serve as influencers, drawing on Schutz's (1970) social phenomenology, which emphasizes the subject-object relationship within the *lebenswelt*. Data collection techniques include phenomenological interviews (Moustakas, 1994, p. 94) and participant observation, as recommended by Schutz (1970, p. 44), to capture the contextual and participatory meaning of social actions.

Although Moustakas does not provide a formal definition of phenomenological interviews, based on the procedural steps he proposes, phenomenological interviews encompass open-ended interviews focused on the description of lived experience, conducted within the stance of *epoché*, and aimed at obtaining both textural and structural descriptions of experience (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 94–99). This approach was applied in interviews with each informant in the present study, particularly to generate textural descriptions in the form of narrative accounts derived from categories and themes identified in the open-ended interview transcripts, as well as structural descriptions in the form of interpretative elaborations.

Participant observation, meanwhile, departs from the suspension of transcendental reduction in Schutz's phenomenology (1970, p. 44), which emphasizes that the analysis of the social world must remain within the "natural attitude," rather than adopting a transcendental reflective stance. Accordingly, participant observation was conducted in what Creswell and Poth (2018, pp. 172–175) described as the "participant-as-observer" role, where the researcher's identity is known, and the researcher is directly involved in the activities of the primary informants. In the context of this study, the researcher engaged as a collaborator in the production of social media content and interacted both as a "viewer" and as a "guest" during their live streaming sessions on social media.

The integration of phenomenology with Bourdieu's concepts as an interpretative framework for analyzing social practices on social media holds the potential to engender epistemological contradictions. As underscored by Mahar et al. (1990), Bourdieu criticizes "phenomenological knowledge" as a form of *naïve* humanism that is satisfied with producing a science rooted exclusively in lived experience and the "rights of subjectivity." Consequently, through generative structuralism, Bourdieu sought to establish a form of social science in which a dialectical relationship exists between subjective and objective structures. Conversely, phenomenology primarily emphasizes subjective structures themselves.

To anticipate and address potential epistemological tensions, the phenomenology employed in this study is situated within the Schutzian framework. Schutz conceptualizes the *lebenswelt* as a reflective world in which individuals live through social embeddedness, rather than as a "transcendental subject" entirely detached from social relations. Consequently, in this study, phenomenological reduction, which directs the subject toward transcendence through *epoché*, is not undertaken, because – as articulated by Schutz (1970, pp. 44, 78) –

such a reduction would “purify” the life-world into the realm of the transcendental ego, thereby abstracting individuals from concrete social embeddedness and isolating subjective structures from objective structures.

The study involves seven informants selected through purposive sampling: four key informants and three supporting informants. Key informants were chosen based on three criteria: *first*, they have operated an SME in the food and beverage (F&B) sector for at least one year, with a clear annual business turnover, as the F&B sector is the most popular in Indonesia (Reynaldi, 2024); *second*, they are also social media influencers, categorized as nano-influencers (1K–10K followers), micro-influencers (10K–100K followers), and macro-influencers (100K–1M followers), each with an engagement rate (ER) above 2% on TikTok; *third*, they reside in Greater Malang as a representation of “local” or “regional” contexts, to avoid “Jakarta-centric” bias, which can overlook issues and communities outside Jakarta. Supporting informants include a mega-influencer (>1M followers), content creators, and branding and digital marketing practitioners. They serve to confirm, intersubjectively, the experiences of key informants. All informants consented to the publication of data with the assurance that their real names, social media accounts, and business brands would remain confidential. Table 1 lists only the initials and relevant information.

Table 1: Key and supporting Informants

No	Informants	Role	Names (Initials)	F	ER
1.	Key informant 1	Medium enterprise owner and macro-influencer	BK	115K	3.44%
2.	Key informant 2	Small enterprise owner & micro-influencer	KP	12K	2.75%
3.	Key informant 3	Small enterprise owner & nano-influencer	MC	5K	2.3%
4.	Key informant 4	Micro enterprise owner and nano-influencer	GA	6k	3.21%
5.	Supporting informant 1	Content creator & mega influencer	AM	1M	2.1%
6.	Supporting informant 2	Content creator / Micro-influencer	YS	14K	3.3%
7.	Supporting informant 3	Digital marketing practitioner	DK	6k	2.2%

F: Number of followers, ER: Engagement rate

Source: Researchers document

The number of informants in this study was not determined by statistical methods; rather, it was guided by the principles of depth of meaning and data adequacy central to phenomenological research. Literature on phenomenology emphasizes that the main goal of inquiry is to capture lived experiences or the essence of shared experiences, rather than to generalize about a population. Therefore, participants were purposively selected based on their direct experience with the phenomenon in question (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 274–275; Moustakas, 1994, p. 91). Data collection was halted once thematic or meaning saturation was reached, that is, when additional interviews no longer produced substantively new themes or categories, and the descriptions were deemed sufficient to reveal the essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 274–275; Moustakas, 1994, pp. 98–99). Four key informants were selected as rich sources of information for their direct experience and reflective engagement with the phenomenon under study, while three supporting informants provided intersubjective validation, perspective triangulation, and interpretive confirmation of the primary findings.

The data were analyzed using the phenomenological model of van Kaam as modified by Moustakas (1994, pp. 120–122), following six stages: (1) horizontalization, to treat all data with equal value; (2) data reduction, by eliminating irrelevant information; (3) categorization

and thematization; (4) textural and structural description of individual experiences; (5) composite description, which integrates multiple perspectives; and (6) drawing conclusions. Validation was conducted through member checking, triangulation, and intersubjective validation (Hanurawan & Suhariadi, 2022, p. 73).

According to Moustakas (1994, pp. 97–100), horizontalization refers to every statement (expression) relevant to the experience under investigation. For Husserl, the concept of horizon in phenomenology denotes the range of possibilities and meanings available to a person – that is, the boundaries of what is currently known or potentially knowable (Beck et al., 1994; Sokolowski, 1999, p. 79). Technically, these boundaries depend on the interview questions. Accordingly, in the context of this study, horizontalization began with the formulation of interview questions – guided by the initial concepts of *habitus* and field – followed by the transcription of interview results, the recording of observational notes, and the treatment of all such materials as “pure data” with equal value.

Subsequently, the transcripts were reduced by eliminating less relevant segments and labeling each informant’s statement with categories and themes related to the initial concepts. Following categorization and thematization, textural descriptions were constructed as narrative accounts, and structural descriptions were developed as interpretative elaborations of each key informant’s individual experiences. These were then integrated into a composite description, which constitutes a form of “discussion.” Before drawing conclusions, the textural and structural descriptions were confirmed, revisited, and discussed with each key informant to provide intersubjective validation.

Employing a qualitative-phenomenological design, this study explores the subjective experiences of local SME influencers within their specific socio-cultural context. Given its contextual and reflective nature, considering both participants’ and the researcher’s conditions, the findings are not intended to be widely generalizable. The diversity of informant backgrounds and researcher perspectives introduces the potential for inconsistency in research replication, which is a recognized methodological consequence in phenomenological approaches. An overview of the research framework for this study is presented in Figure 2.

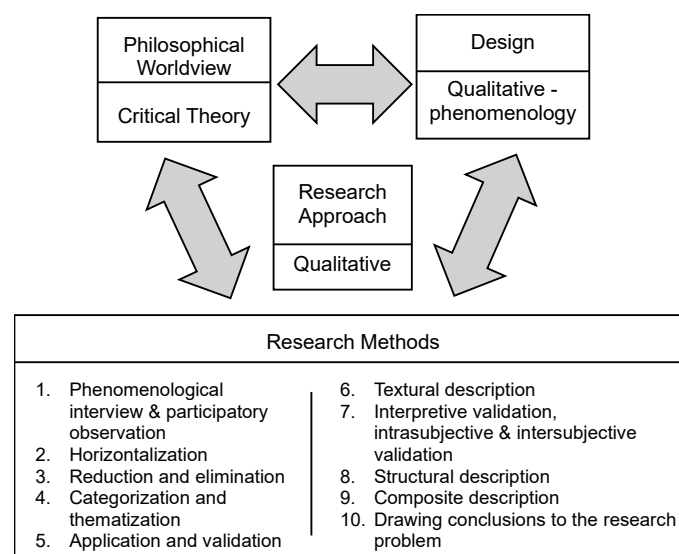


Figure 2: Research Framework – The Interconnection between Philosophical Assumptions, Design, Methods, and Approach.

Source: Author’s synthesis from Creswell and Creswell (2022), Creswell and Poth (2018), and Moustakas (1994)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phenomenological interviews were conducted with four key informants at their respective business locations, which served as research sites, between September and November 2024. Participant observation was also carried out during the same period, in which the researcher observed daily business activities, live streaming on social media, and the processes of producing and engaging with audio-visual content. Indirect observation was also conducted by monitoring their social media activity to record how they interacted with and responded to their audience, both during live streams and in interactions with uploaded content. Meanwhile, interviews with supporting informants were conducted from November 2024 to January 2025.

In-depth open-ended interviews were conducted using audio-recording devices and subsequently transcribed, with systematic coding applied to each question and response. The interview transcripts were then reduced and edited to remove statements that were less relevant to the research problem. This was followed by categorization and thematic coding using Atlas.ti, applied to each coded statement from the key informants. The development of categories and themes was guided by Bourdieu's theoretical framework (1985, 2013), in which social practices are understood as the product of the interaction between *habitus* and field. *Habitus* refers to values, beliefs, and dispositions acquired through lived experience, while social media is conceptualized as a field, namely an arena characterized by specific distributions of capital. In this study, *habitus* and field constitute the analytical categories, whereas themes represent the dimensions or aspects within these categories. Through this analytical process, 28 themes were identified in the interview data, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Categories and themes in the study

No	Categories	Themes
1.	<i>Habitus</i>	1) Worldview; 2) Religious identity; 3) Social interaction; 4) Internalization of knowledge/learning processes; 5) Personal values; 6) Religious values; 7) Norms on social media; 9) Work experience; 10) Behavior on social media; 11) Learning process; 12) Reflection of beliefs; 13) Attitude towards digital reality; 14) Social action
2.	Field	15) Social access; 16) Social domination; 17) Social hierarchy; 18) Social interaction on social media; 19) Social legitimacy; 20) Symbolic tension/competition; 21) Social hierarchy in social media; 22) Social reality on social media; 23) <i>Social setting</i> ; 24) Target <i>audience</i> ; 25) Cultural capital; 26) Social capital; 27) Economic capital; 28) Symbolic capital

Source: Researchers document

From the themes presented in Table 2, values and worldviews can be identified as dispositional expressions of *habitus* formed through the informants' lived experiences across various social fields. Meanwhile, social media is analyzed as a field in which different forms of capital (economic, social, and symbolic) and related themes are negotiated – serving as the locus of social practice. Within this framework, Bourdieu's perspective bridges the informants' subjective experiences with broader social structures without undermining the inductive character of phenomenological analysis.

The next step is to construct textural descriptions as narratives of each key informant's individual experiences. These textural descriptions take the form of narrative accounts, including biographical information, business journey records, and the trajectories of key informants on social media. Subsequently, each key informant is allowed to review these accounts as a form of interpretive validation, ensuring that the data accurately reflects the

informant's perspective. In the next stage, these individual experiences are contextualized within the research problem through structural descriptions, followed by a conclusion related to the research problem, as elaborated in the subsequent sections.

Results

i. Values and Worldview

In this study, values refer to motivational constructs that guide individual choices and behaviors across situations, reflecting core beliefs and principles. Meanwhile, worldview, or what sociological tradition refers to as *weltanschauung*, denotes a comprehensive perspective on the world that shapes how individuals perceive and interpret reality or make sense of social phenomena. *Weltanschauung* influences multiple aspects of life, including practices or rituals, identity, beliefs, and engagement, all of which are interconnected and collectively shape an individual's outlook on the world.

Based on the inductive analysis of the textual descriptions which include biographical accounts, business journey records, and the social media trajectories of key informants, all obtained through interviews and observations, it is evident that the key informants adhere strongly to values such as: (1) religious ethics and social resilience; (2) creative independence and mental fortitude; (3) a sustainable work ethic and inclusive togetherness; and (4) integrity-driven collaboration for continuous innovation. These values, in turn, shape a worldview that influences their social media practices. Table 3 presents the values, worldviews, and statements from key informants that reflect these values, both implicitly and explicitly.

Table 3: Values, worldviews, and statements of key informants

Key Inf.	Values	Worldview	Statements
BK	The ethos of religiosity and social resilience	Humanistic religiosity	• "We work for the long term, for our families. Even though the profits aren't much, we're grateful as long as we stay consistent and keep going, that's what matters." • "Giving charity is the key that opens the door to sustenance. Every month, I always give rice to my employees." • "If I were to take legal action against them (the competitors), what would happen to their business? They are also just trying to make a living."
GA	Creative independence and mental resilience	Individual Reflexivity	• "I really limit investor intervention. I want to shape my business according to my own vision. My business, my story." • "I don't pay attention to superstitions about business that most people around me believe in. I'd rather listen to my customers for future improvements." • "My parents didn't support me, but I went for it anyway!"
MC	Inclusive togetherness and sustainable creative ethos	Social inclusivity and lifelong learning	• "Whether male or female, everyone should feel comfortable and safe in my coffee shop." • "I have to make sure that every employee who resigns from my business is better off than before they worked here." • "Everyone who works here is my friend from the local community, especially from the punk and hardcore subculture."

KP	Integrity-driven collaboration for sustainable innovation	Adaptive progressivism	• “Collaboration has to be fair. If a partner tries to control too much, I don’t like it.” • “There’s no need for a physical store. These days, you can do it all with just an online store. I’ve proven it myself.” • “My position as an influencer has really helped boost my business brand on social media.”
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Source: Researchers document

Based on the values they uphold and the results of inductive analysis, the key informants possess the following worldviews: (1) Humanistic religiosity, which is a worldview that integrates religious values with respect for humanity and upholds universal moral values that appreciate diversity; (2) Individual reflexivity, characterized by a high degree of self-awareness regarding life experiences, values, and meaning, enabling individuals to continually evaluate and adjust their worldview; (3) Social inclusivity and lifelong learning, which emphasize openness, diversity, and a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation to social change; and (4) Adaptive progressivism, which involves striving to think forward while remaining flexible, innovative, and able to adapt to changing times without losing core principles.

The four identified worldview categories were constructed inductively through a process of thematic analysis. This process began with the coding of the informants’ experiential narratives, which were subsequently grouped into categories and themes based on similarities in meaning and value orientation. These categories were then abstracted into conceptual constructs representing relatively consistent patterns of worldview among each key informant. Accordingly, these categories constitute the outcome of an interpretative synthesis of empirical data.

Thus, it can be concluded that, in general, the core value upheld by the key informants is “inclusive sustainability and resilient integrity,” while there a worldview (*weltanschauung*) can be characterized as “reflective and sustainable humanism.” These values and worldviews are shaped through processes of socialization and internalization across cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions throughout their lives in various fields, such as family, education, business, the surrounding environment, and social media as a “second reality.” Ultimately, these form the foundation of their framework of action (*habitus*) in both the real and the digital worlds.

The worldview in question emerges as an individual ethical orientation – embedded (as an integral part) within *habitus* – which, in Bourdieu’s terms (1990, p. 56,61, 2013, p. 94), is not the product of conscious decision-making, but operates as a practical sense (*sens pratique* - “has a logic which is not that of logic”), or in other words, as pre-reflexive. However, this study demonstrates that such ethical orientation does not remain at the level of personal morality; rather, it functions as a disposition that subsequently shapes strategies of action within the space of social media platforms – that is, it assumes a reflexive character. For Bourdieu (1990b, p. 11, 108, 1990a, pp. 62–65), reflexivity emerges only in situations of “crisis,” hysteresis, and when *habitus* is misaligned with the field, not within “normal” practice.

This study shows that the worldview – constituting part of *habitus* – precisely exhibits reflexive qualities and continuously undergoes adjustment when confronted with the dominant structures of social media, which are to a significant extent determined by

algorithmic entities. This process of adjustment does not always result in open rejection of the structure; rather, it forms what Sweetman (2003) describes as a “reflexive *habitus*,” in which “reflexivity” is understood as an identity that must be continually monitored, life choices must be constantly revised, and lifestyle, consumption, the body, career, and relationships all become objects of ongoing reflection.

In this regard, Sweetman (2003) critiques Bourdieu for neglecting the interactive dimension of *habitus*, as reflexivity would be difficult to explain without it. Similarly, critics of Bourdieu, such as Decoteau (2015); and Mouzelis (2017), argue that *habitus* can no longer be understood as entirely pre-reflexive, particularly in contemporary conditions that demand more permanent reflexivity. Through worldview, one can observe how the key informants’ reflexive *habitus* consciously evaluates, adjusts, and negotiates practices without fully submitting to structural determination.

From Foucault’s (1988) perspective, this reflexivity may be read as a form of “technologies of the self” – practices that enable individuals to perform a number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of life, thereby transforming themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, or perfection. In the context of this study, the key informants actively shape themselves through a worldview as reflexive *habitus* within power relations. This reflexivity does not stand outside power; rather, it becomes a medium through which subjects produce room for maneuver within the structure of digital reality – social media – or, as Foucault (1978, pp. 92–93) puts it, immanent points of opposition within power relations.

ii. Social Practices on Social Media

There is a phenomenon in which key informants perceive the realities of everyday life and social media as distinct yet interconnected fields, particularly in relation to the forms of capital that operate within each. In everyday life, the field is understood in several clusters, such as family, education, business, and the surrounding residential environment. However, in reality, social media is perceived as a unified whole. There is a tendency to perceive economic and cultural capital as operating predominantly within everyday reality, while social and symbolic capital are seen as more prominent in social media. This tendency is inseparable from the fact that their business products are physical goods with tangible assets, and that formal education or lifelong learning processes are experienced in everyday reality.

The values and worldviews of these key informants, in turn, must inevitably interact with the norms present on social media. They perceive that these social media norms conflict with their own values and worldviews, creating tension between personal intentions and the audience’s norms and expectations. Table 4 presents several statements from key informants regarding these disagreements and the resulting tensions.

Table 4: Statements from key informants

Key Inf.	Statements
BK	• “Social media is characterized by widespread misrepresentation. Someone who presents a lie on social media will just cover it up with another lie.” • “Flexing, showing off wealth and material things, is common on social media. People do it just for likes and to go viral. But I don’t want to be like that.” • “I could do something sensational, but it would only add to my stress and distance me from my family.”
GA	• “On social media, many people like to criticize and enjoy hearing bad news, like accidents and similar things.”

MC	• “It’s as if anything sold on social media via live stream must have a female host dressed provocatively.” • “The objectification of women and sexual harassment seem to be normalized on social media, even becoming a joke. I experience this often.” • “Going viral through controversy makes a business unsustainable.” • “It’s easy to go viral on TikTok; just hire attractive and sexy women. But I don’t want to do that.” • “People are too quick to comment without seeing the full facts. This is something we need to work on.” • “Controversial things go viral easily; social media users are easily influenced. I want to go viral because of a quality product, not the other way around. From the start, I’ve disliked the word ‘viral.’”
KP	• “Going viral on social media is pointless if it’s not supported by a good-quality product, especially if it’s plagiarism. People will be disappointed, and you can’t expect repeat orders. • “Focus on yourself and improving product quality, instead of creating controversy everywhere.” • “We, as small businesses, are vulnerable to bad reviews and even hate comments. Negative reviews can go viral faster and put us under pressure.”

Source: Researchers document

Key informants identified several dominant social media norms: (1) exhibitionist behavior with a materialistic orientation, reinforced by algorithms (especially on TikTok); (2) user support for controversial and sensational content to gain popularity; (3) gendered expectations encouraging female creators to present erotic elements, often normalizing harassment as humor; (4) virality (“FYP”) as the primary measure of content success; (5) user value determined by follower count; (6) social media as a space for free expression that legitimizes negative comments and cyberbullying; and (7) normalization of plagiarism and content adaptation to algorithms for visibility. These seven tendencies shape user behavior and the value structure within digital spaces.

In Bourdieu’s framework, these dominant norms can be understood as *doxa*, that is, a set of implicit assumptions and beliefs that are taken for granted within a particular society or culture, in this case, social media. These dominant norms, as *doxa*, are “enforced” by algorithms as invisible entities that serve as extensions of the dominant ideology embedded in the layers of social media platforms. A supporting informant, AM, stated, “People will be satisfied if content creators do what they want, but we cannot please everyone. For content creators who understand, the algorithm is our common ‘enemy’.” At this point, contemporary social media norms conflict with the values and worldviews of key informants, which have been shaped by the internalization of values and learning processes in everyday life.

The gap between personal values and contemporary social media norms gives rise to a form of moderate resistance. Although there is a tension, this does not lead to outright rejection of the dominant (*doxa*) structure of social media. Instead, it encourages adaptation or modification within the boundaries of existing objective structures, creating new spaces for agency without severing ties completely. This moderate resistance is exemplified by BK, who consistently responds to hostile comments with authenticity, openness, and friendliness; by GA, who uses a “strict” persona to minimize the risk of sexual harassment; by MC, who conducts business with the support of marginalized groups; and by KP, who is highly collaborative with various parties on social media.

This moderate resistance, as Bourdieu explains in his concept of distinction, functions as a subtle heterodox social strategy. Such practices produce an appealing and sympathetic image, for example, that of an independent Gen Z woman with a stable business who still enjoys her youth, or a business owner who survives and thrives with the support of marginal resources, a subculture. This distinctive image reflects the main informants' efforts to use taste to assert their identity and social status, often in ways that diverge from dominant norms. Moderate resistance gives rise to a distinctive image that can serve as the foundation for a more authentic personal brand, as it is imbued with values and worldviews that are consciously maintained. This aligns with what supporting informant DK expressed: *"Personal branding is a moderation between personal aspects and fulfilling 'public expectations'."* The forms of moderate resistance and the distinctive images of key informants are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Moderate resistance and distinctive personal image

Key Inf.	Moderate resistance	Distinctive Personal Image
BK	By employing an authentic approach, with social media content that transparently depicts the everyday realities of business, the informant offers a counter-narrative to show-off behavior, materialistic orientations, and controversial conduct.	A franchise owner providing affordable food, who has established 200 business partners within three years while inspiring over 100,000 followers through principles of simplicity, honesty, and sharing in business, eschewing controversial gimmicks.
GA	The use of a "comedic rant" or mock rage approach, feigning anger for humorous effect, serves as a strategy to address and subvert gender expectations and sexualized behaviors prevalent on social media.	An owner of a unique, affordable banana-based food business who has built their enterprise through social media content that showcases their daily life as a non-conventional entrepreneur with a distinctively assertive style, inspiring the local community through hard work, innovation, and creativity.
MC	The subject utilizes the talents of peers from local communities and subcultures (including marginalized groups), incorporating local urban dialects and cultural symbols into each piece of social media content. This serves as a counter-discourse to the myth of "professionalism," which often evaluates workers solely on the basis of formal qualifications.	A coffee shop owner offering the experience of "coffee in an urban forest" at accessible prices while employing members of marginalized communities, thereby demonstrating that business can be conducted in solidarity. Through carefree, humorous content and live streaming, they promote both branches of their café while disseminating principles of equality, hard work, and non-formal learning as the foundation of an inclusive business.
KP	Content highlighting leadership activities in both business and academic contexts is presented as a counter-narrative to prevailing gender expectations in male-dominated business environments.	An influencer, university student, and owner of three businesses who seeks to demonstrate that Generation Z is capable of being multitalented, achieving success in the culinary industry while also excelling academically, musically, and in community engagement. This individual inspires over 11,000 followers through content that highlights collaboration, innovation, creativity, and integrity as keys to success.

Source: Author's document

The moderate resistance demonstrated by key informants is a strategy that combines authenticity, humor, and inclusivity to construct alternative narratives in opposition to the dominant norms of social media (such as show-off behavior and materialism). This strategy is effective because it: (1) leverages emotional appeal (humor, empathy), (2) builds collective

identity (local/marginal communities), and (3) offers a counter-discourse that is non-patronizing. As an act of agency, moderate resistance represents the interaction between *habitus* (Bourdieu) and the objective structure of social media, while simultaneously creating new values that are eventually internalized by local SME influencers. Thus, this practice constitutes a form of resistance against power and dominant norms in digital spaces. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

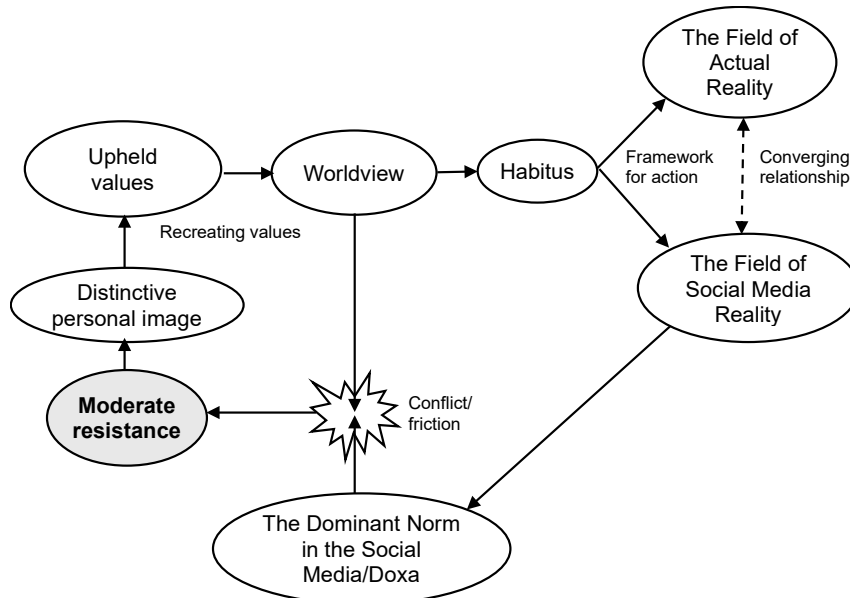


Figure 2: The intersection of personal worldviews and dominant social media norms gives rise to moderate resistance and a distinctive personal image.
 Source: Author's analysis

Discussion

i. Contemporary Doxa of Social Media

Key informants identified several dominant norms emerging on social media, including a tendency toward exhibitionist behavior, materialistic orientation, an attraction to controversial and sensational content, problematic gender expectations, the normalization of sexual harassment, as well as free expression in the form of negative comments and cyberbullying. These findings are consistent with studies by Cyrklaff-Gorczyca (2022), Kucuk et al. (2024), and Shannon et al. (2022) which indicate that digitalization reinforces a culture of consumerism and social validation through social media. Digital platforms not only facilitate exhibitionist and sensationalist lifestyles but also increase the prevalence of aggressive behaviors such as negative comments and online bullying.

Within Bourdieu's (2013) theoretical framework, this phenomenon can be interpreted as the contemporary *doxa* of social media, a set of implicit assumptions and beliefs that are accepted unquestioningly, shaping perceptions and social practices that reinforce symbolic structures and digital hierarchies. One central aspect of this *doxa* is the myth of self-disclosure as a defining feature of online platforms (Masur et al., 2023). Through feedback features such as likes, comments, shares, and other performative interactions further amplified by algorithms, users are encouraged to continuously share content to obtain social validation, thereby creating an endless cycle of social validation (Samala & Rawas, 2024; Sun et al., 2024).

Features such as photo sharing, status updates, and persona customization, including facial filters, enable users to align with dominant aesthetic standards (Islam et al., 2019). The realities constructed and curated through this content often showcase extravagant lifestyles, creating a cycle of social comparison that triggers anxiety and defensive or aggressive reactions (Bonnette et al., 2019; Wang & Stefanone, 2013). This digital environment collectively reinforces norms of exhibitionism, social validation, and a show-off culture, normalizing and even expecting such behaviors (Cyrklaff-Gorczyca, 2022; Le, 2024). The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) further strengthens these norms, driving consumptive behaviors so that users always appear connected and up to date (Bläse et al., 2024).

In this context, *doxa* not only reflects individual behavior but also functions as a structural mechanism that shapes digital perspectives and interactions. Gómez (2021) emphasizes that these dynamics are closely related to the logic of social and digital capital, in which individuals with higher levels of digital capital are better able to adapt to platform norms and reinforce a culture of exhibitionism (Husu, 2022; Ragnedda, 2020). Conversely, groups with limited access to digital and cultural capital are at risk of marginalization (Danielsson, 2021; Pitzalis & Porcu, 2024).

Thus, the culture of show-off, social validation, and digital exhibitionism on social media is not merely a personal reflection but rather a manifestation of contemporary social structures and digital inequalities. This is reinforced by the findings of Dawson (2023) and Lyon (2022), which shows that social media functions as both an instrument of surveillance and a means of reproducing class, racial, and gender inequalities. Within this landscape, moderate resistance emerges as a social strategy that operates within the boundaries of dominant social media structures, challenging contemporary *doxa* through alternative practices that are neither confrontational nor insignificant in shaping spaces for the articulation of identity and digital expression.

ii. Resistance at the Layer of Social Practice in Social Media

Developmentalist policies promoted by those in power, such as the “UMKM Go Digital” initiative, are oriented toward economic growth through consumption. This, in turn, shapes a consumerist society that serves neo-liberal capitalism under the pretext of fostering “competitive individuals.” Such dynamics are frequently observed in developing countries across ASEAN, including Indonesia (Jurriëns & Tapsell, 2017). Developmentalist policies mobilize society to enter the logic of the market, including local SMEs, with all the attendant risks and vulnerabilities.

Foucault (1978, pp. 93–94) conceptualizes power as diffuse, operating through networks across society rather than being centralized. Discourse shapes and transforms norms, values, and practices, with shifts in discourse reflecting broader institutional and social changes (Foucault, 2002). Power emerges not only from the state but also from experts and institutions that establish norms and policies (Foucault, 1980, pp. 107–108, 188). In this study, SME digitalization policies, characterized by developmentalist and technocratic tendencies, constitute the dominant discourse and ideology at the institutional level.

Foucault (1980, pp. 107–108, 245–246) asserts that power does not operate solely at the institutional level, but also spreads through discourse that shapes public perception, with the media serving as a primary channel. Social media platforms, as non-state institutions, reproduce developmentalist-consumerist values through contemporary *doxa* such as digital

exhibitionism and social validation. This mechanism operates much like Foucault's *panopticon*, in which algorithms encourage users to internalize surveillance and regulate their own behavior (for example, spending hours editing photos for social validation).

On the other hand, social media platforms engage in data capitalization practices as a means of control. Developmentalist authorities require data for policymaking, while social media platforms collect user data. Authorities promote economic digitalization, and social media platforms serve as tools to mobilize society into the logic of the market. Viral and controversial content may divert attention from criticism of such forms of structural violence, shifting focus from social inequality to celebrity debates or gossip. Both authorities and social media platforms exist in a symbiotic relationship in "disciplining" the population. Social media platforms thus constitute a second layer of power, following the institutional layer.

In this context, contemporary *doxa* operates within individuals' social media practices. Bourdieu's principle of the interactive–dialectical relationship between subject and object, structure and agent, suggests that while individuals are shaped by contemporary *doxa* on social media as discourse, they also possess agency to resist and subvert these norms. This, in line with Foucault's concept of power, necessitates the existence of "micro" forms of resistance. Here, moderate resistance constitutes an act of agency that opposes norms (contemporary *doxa*) as objective structures on social media by means of modification, adaptation, or the creation of alternatives within certain boundaries, thereby generating new spaces for action without completely severing ties with the dominant structures present in the digital reality of social media as the third layer of power.

Nevertheless, within the context of this study, resistance does not simply emerge as an external opposition to structure. Resistance here is understood as a social phenomenon at the level of social agents, operating within an affective flow that produces effects in social situations (Fox & Alldred, 2018) – namely, a "refusal" to accept or comply with something, or an effort to prevent something through action or argument. Fox and Alldred (2018) further argue that resistance constitutes a micro-political event, involving the use of both formal and informal power by individuals or groups to achieve their goals within organizations. Such micro-political events manifest willing subjects who possess the power to enact forms of agency. This aligns with Foucault's (1978, pp. 95–96) concept that power can only be exercised over free subjects (and therefore willing subjects), thereby presupposing a "field of possibilities" that renders resistance always possible.

Within this "field of possibilities," the key informants articulate counter-discourses against dominant norms and engage in conscious social action, exercising their will in pursuit of personal goals grounded in values and worldviews, and subsequently deploying their "power" as influencers with the expectation of producing effects within social situations—in other words, reflexivity. At this juncture, as discussed in the previous section, reflexive *habitus* occupies this field of possibilities: identity is continually monitored; life choices are persistently revised; lifestyle, consumption, the body, career, and relationships are repeatedly interrogated; and practices are consciously evaluated, adjusted, and negotiated without fully submitting to structural determination – constituting moderate resistance.

Although this resistance ultimately generates a distinctive personal image that becomes "personal branding," akin to mainstream marketing strategies, and strategies such as authenticity, humor, and inclusivity gain visibility through algorithmic support, it is precisely here that moderation resides. Moderate resistance refers to form of resistance that is moderated—neither frontal nor characterized by withdrawal from social media (exit), nor

compliant with dominant norms (compliance), but rather negotiating through social practice—fundamentally ambivalent in nature. This ambivalence does not negate its resistant dimension, as it is inherent to resistance practices. As Foucault (1978, p. 96) states, points of resistance always emerge within networks of power and take diverse and specific forms—some sporadic or coordinated, some symbolic, others tending toward brutality and violence that produce casualties, while others quickly “compromise.”

Power, as articulated by Foucault (1978, pp. 93–94), is everywhere and comes from everywhere. It is diffused throughout the layers of social structure. It is precisely within this context that moderate resistance becomes a practice shaped by the interaction between the dispositions of (reflexive) *habitus* and the limits of diffused power. *Habitus* shapes the style, strategy, and intensity of resistance, while power defines the horizon—establishing the boundaries of possibility within which resistance can occur. Therefore, moderate resistance may be understood as the outcome of reflexive dispositions operating within a field of power that cannot be entirely transcended yet can be negotiated.

Thus, there are three layers of power: the institutional layer, the social media platform layer, and the social practices layer. These layers of power reflect Foucault’s concept of diffused power. Moderate resistance operates at the third layer, representing micro-level resistance by local SME influencers against dominant power structures in social practice, which serve as an extension of institutional power. The layer of power in which moderate resistance operates is illustrated in Figure 3. (Note: Regarding the concept of diffused power, Foucault never provided a visualization or analogy of such layers; the authors synthesized the following figure. Readers are encouraged to review and/or critique this interpretation.)

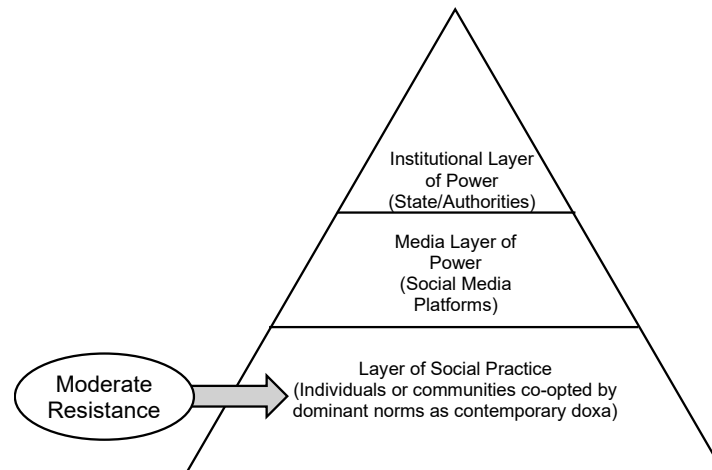


Figure 3. Moderate resistance targets power at the level of social practice.
Source: Researcher’s analysis and synthesis from Foucault (1978, 1980, 2002)

iii. Moderate Resistance: The Emancipatory Endeavors of SME Influencers on Social Media

In general, within the context of sociology, resistance encompasses actions that respond to, challenge, or reshape power relations, whether directly or covertly (Lilja, 2022). The resistance enacted by local SME influencers at the level of social practice is a consequence of the disjuncture between their values, beliefs, and worldviews and the prevailing norms on social media. This is consistent with the research of Farrand (2014), with Ramhurry and Ramhurry (2024), which discusses how conscientious objection can be understood as a form

of resistance against dominant power structures, illustrating individuals' potential to challenge and disrupt hegemonic discourses.

The form of resistance observed here is more accurately characterized as "moderation," which, in sociological terms, generally refers to a balanced approach to social interaction, particularly in navigating diversity and differing ideologies to maintain social cohesion and address social gaps and conflicts (Wodtke & Almirall, 2017). In the context of this study, rather than completely abandoning social media due to conflicting values and worldviews, local SME influencers continue to maintain social interaction and cohesion by remaining connected to dominant norms while simultaneously creating alternative spaces. Therefore, this form of resistance is called moderate resistance.

Thus, moderate resistance can be defined as actions or attitudes that oppose norms as objective structures on social media by modifying, adapting, or creating alternatives within certain boundaries, thereby creating new spaces for agency without completely severing ties with the dominant structures present in the digital reality of social media. According to Lilja (2022), moderate resistance falls under the category of constructive resistance, which refers to acts of resistance that involve creating alternatives or new institutions capable of disrupting or replacing existing forms of power. Meanwhile, in the sense described by Hollander and Einwohner (2004), moderate resistance constitutes Externally Defined Resistance, meaning acts of resistance that are not necessarily recognized, intended, or acknowledged as resistance by either the actors or the targets, but are interpreted as such by observers, activists, or scholars.

As the literature review reveals, in the field of sociology, the concepts of "resistance" and "moderation" have thus far been understood separately and have not yet been integrated into a unified concept. Outside the social sciences in microbiology, for example, "moderate resistance" refers to the ability of bacteria to withstand antibiotics to a significant, though not extreme, degree (Benameur et al., 2016). In sports science, the term refers to weight training at a moderate intensity (Vinolo-Gil et al., 2022). The former meaning more closely aligns with the notion of moderate resistance as used in this study. Thus, it can be said that the term is borrowed from microbiology to explain the social phenomenon under investigation. This also positions the concept of moderate resistance as a novel finding in this study, emerging as a consequence of the gap between the values and worldviews of local SME influencers, which are shaped by lived reality, and the dominant norms on social media, which are themselves reflections and derivatives of developmentalist and digital capitalist ideologies.

On the other hand, this study involves key informants operating within the F&B sector, which inherently possesses visual, performative, and personal branding characteristics. These features enable the deployment of strategies such as humor, authentic expression, and personal narrative as media of resistance against dominant values and algorithmic homogenization. Consequently, the form of moderate resistance identified in this study is likely influenced by the nature of a sector that is highly compatible with the visual culture and performativity of social media. The performative expression of moderate resistance is therefore contextual within this research setting.

In other sectors – such as consulting services, engineering equipment manufacturing, or handicrafts – the performative expressions may differ; however, the underlying mechanisms of negotiation may remain generic. Accordingly, future research may broaden

the sectoral scope to examine how variations in product characteristics and market logics mediate the forms of performative expression that emerge.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses two research questions regarding local SME influencers' engagement with social media. First, it identifies their core values as "inclusive sustainability and resilient integrity" and their worldview as "reflective and sustainable humanism," shaped through socialization across family, education, business, and digital environments. These internalized values form the basis of their *habitus* within social media.

Second, the study reveals that local SME influencers exhibit moderate resistance, a novel concept that bridges Bourdieu's generative structuralism and Foucault's power dynamics. Moderate resistance denotes actions that oppose dominant social media norms (exhibitionism, materialism, validation-seeking) through modification, adaptation, or alternative creation, without completely severing ties with existing structures. This resistance emerges from tensions between influencers' internalized values and dominant digital norms, representing agency and emancipatory effort against structural violence in Indonesia's SME digitalization narrative.

Moderate resistance operates through cultural and symbolic disruption, functioning as micro-resistance against algorithmic power and data capitalism. Theoretically, this study extends Bourdieu and Foucault into digital contexts, reframing digitalization as politically non-neutral and embedded in power relations. It also provides a counter-narrative to positivist SME digitalization research.

In practice, moderate resistance can be quantified as a variable and incorporated into emancipatory frameworks for SME digital transformation and social media marketing strategies. Study limitations include context-specific findings and potential epistemological contradictions between phenomenological methods and structuralist theory. Future research should examine moderate resistance in ASEAN developing countries with developmentalist policies, employ mixed-methods to assess the impacts on business performance, and explore alternative policies responsive to local conditions to achieve a more equitable digital transformation.

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