

Leveraging SEO and SEM Strategies to Enhance Online Sales Performance (A Comparative Study of Ramayana.com and Matahari.com)

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) in enhancing digital visibility and business performance through a comparative study of Ramayana.com and Matahari.com. The study employed a qualitative comparative approach using secondary data obtained from website observation, Google search result analysis, Google Trends data, social media visibility, and company financial reports from 2017 to 2025. The data were analyzed using comparative descriptive analysis to evaluate on-page SEO, off-page SEO, search engine visibility, search interest trends, and profit growth patterns of both companies. The results indicate that both websites have low search engine visibility. For the keyword “beli baju pria,” neither website appeared on the first page of Google search results; Matahari.com ranked on the second page, while Ramayana.com appeared on the third page. Google Trends data further show consistently low search interest for both websites throughout 2025, although Matahari.com recorded a temporary spike with an index value of 100, indicating short-term traffic driven by SEM-based campaigns. In contrast, Ramayana.com demonstrated relatively stable but lower digital engagement. From a financial perspective, both companies experienced post-pandemic recovery; however, profit growth remained fluctuating. Ramayana recorded profit growth of 14.45% in 2024 before declining by 13.09% in 2025, while Matahari recorded growth of 10.53% in 2024 before declining by 14.29% in 2025. These findings confirm that SEO contributes to long-term digital visibility, whereas SEM is more effective in generating short-term traffic. Therefore, the integration of SEO and SEM is essential to strengthen digital visibility, improve user engagement, and support more sustainable business performance.

Keywords: SEO, SEM, Digital Marketing, Website Optimization, Online Sales.

1 INTRODUCTION

The transformation of information technology into a digital-based system has significantly altered the structure of modern society. People around the world have adopted the use of the internet in their daily lives. This shift has forced the business world to transition from traditional services to digital-based technologies. Many companies, including those in the retail sector, have digitized their services due to the high market opportunities. According to the Indonesian Internet Penetration Survey, the growth of internet penetration in Indonesia reached 79.50% in 2023. This data indicates that 79.50% of Indonesia's total population used internet networks throughout 2023. Most internet users, around 74.27%, accessed the internet via mobile operators, and 89.44% of internet usage occurred through mobile

phones or tablets. Additionally, 61.73% of internet content comprises promotions or prize lotteries, highlighting that businesses have increasingly used internet networks for transactions.

According to Tonyjanto, business actors extensively utilize the internet for product marketing and buy-sell transactions. Meanwhile, consumers frequently use the internet to search for products that meet their needs, driven by numerous considerations before completing a transaction. Therefore, businesses must design websites that enhance business activities, ultimately resulting in increased sales.

Kader asserts that businesses significantly boost their sales through the use of digital technology. Sales occur due to buy-sell transactions between business operators and consumers [1]. Consumers rely on information presented on the company's website to make



purchase decisions. An increase in purchase transactions by consumers consequently boosts the company's sales.

Zulmy suggests that increased sales through online businesses can result from well-designed search engine optimization (SEO) [2]. Companies engage in branding activities by optimizing content to rank higher on search engines, making it easier for consumers to find their websites. Search engines like Google increase website traffic volume, thereby enhancing accessibility for consumers. This increase in traffic volume can directly boost sales by facilitating higher transaction rates among consumers.

Ningsih explains that search engine optimization (SEO) is an activity that makes it easier for websites to be found by search engines such as Google or Yahoo [3]. SEO leverages information based on targeted keywords, making it more accessible to search engines. The easier it is for search engines to locate a company's website, the higher its search traffic. This increased search traffic facilitates consumer access to the company's website, leading to more business transactions and, consequently, higher company sales.

According to Darmayanti, increasing traffic and sales through online businesses can also be achieved using search engine marketing (SEM) [4]. SEM involves improving website visibility through advertisements provided by search engines, which often incur costs. Currently, most search engines offer advertisements that appear at the top of search results when consumers use specific keywords. SEM is considered more effective in increasing website traffic because it is directly facilitated by search engines.

Despite the growing importance of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) in digital marketing, previous studies have predominantly examined these strategies separately, focusing either on their impact on website traffic, consumer engagement, or online sales performance. Limited research has conducted a direct comparative analysis of SEO and SEM within the same business context, particularly in the retail industry in emerging markets such as Indonesia. Moreover, existing studies tend to emphasize conceptual or experimental approaches, while empirical evidence based on real website performance data and financial outcomes remains relatively underexplored.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a comparative analysis of SEO and SEM implementation in two major Indonesian retail websites, Ramayana.com and Matahari.com. By integrating digital visibility indicators, such as search engine ranking and search interest trends, with financial performance data, this research offers a more comprehensive understanding of how SEO and SEM contribute to business performance. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by bridging the gap between digital marketing strategies

and measurable business outcomes, while also providing practical insights for companies seeking to optimize their online presence in a competitive digital environment.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid growth of internet penetration and the digitalization of business services have transformed the way companies interact with consumers. This transformation highlights the importance of leveraging digital marketing strategies, particularly Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM), to optimize online sales. As more consumers rely on search engines to discover products and services, businesses must ensure their websites are visible and accessible to their target audiences.

To provide a deeper understanding of these strategies, this study explores existing theories and findings related to SEO and SEM. The literature review will discuss key concepts, definitions, and benefits from previous studies, forming the basis for analyzing their role in enhancing online business performance.

Table 1. Literature Insights on SEO and SEM Strategies for Online Businesses

No	Author	Title	Theory/Findings	Relevance
1	Fitriasari (2024)	The Role of SEO in Building Consumer Engagement	Improves consumer engagement and boosts sales.	Highlights the importance of optimizing content for consumer engagement, crucial for businesses transitioning to digital platforms [5].
2	Zulmy (2022)	Improving Sales Through Effective SEO Strategies	Increases traffic and enhances company branding.	Demonstrates how SEO can directly impact sales and branding, relevant for companies aiming to enhance online visibility [2].
3	Saputra (2024)	The Impact of SEM on Online Business Growth	Promotes discoverability and strengthens online presence.	Emphasizes the role of paid search in modern marketing strategies, significant for businesses investing in

				online promotions [6].
4	Darmayanti (2023)	Enhancing Traffic and Sales Using SEM	Generates higher traffic and supports promotional campaigns.	Supports the effectiveness of SEM in driving traffic and achieving measurable marketing results [4].
5	Ningsih (2022)	SEO as a Tool for Increasing Website Traffic	Simplifies consumer access and enhances sales performance.	Explains how keyword optimization aligns with search engine algorithms, essential for increasing website traffic [3].

This table provides a comprehensive overview of the importance of SEO and SEM in digital marketing strategies and their implications for improving online business performance. The data is useful for companies or researchers looking to gain a deeper understanding of digital strategies to enhance visibility and sales through online platforms.

This study uses a qualitative method to describe the relationship between search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM) in increasing sales volume on business websites.

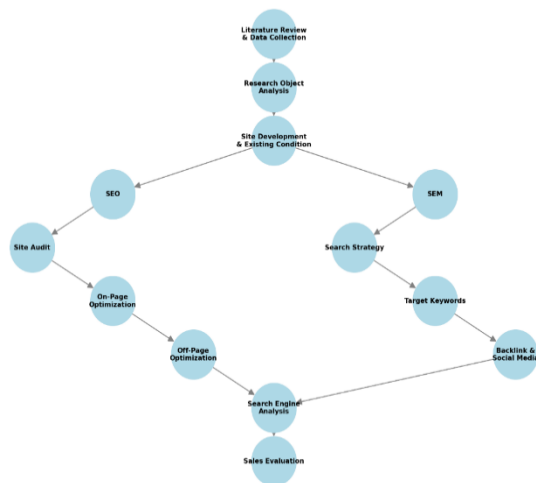


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) in improving sales for business websites [7], [8], [9]. The process begins with a literature review and data collection to establish a

foundational understanding, followed by analyzing the research object, which refers to the business websites being studied. The next stage focuses on site development and assessing existing conditions to prepare for optimization. The framework then branches into two paths: SEO and SEM. The SEO process involves a site audit to evaluate the website's current state, on-page optimization to improve elements like content and metadata, and off-page optimization to enhance authority through external links. The SEM process includes developing a search strategy for paid advertisements, identifying target keywords, and leveraging backlinks and social media to boost visibility. Both branches converge in the search engine analysis stage to evaluate performance, ultimately leading to sales evaluation to assess the impact of SEO and SEM strategies on business outcome

Overall, this research highlights that the implementation of SEO and SEM is not merely a digital marketing effort but a fundamental strategy for optimizing online business performance. In the context of Ramayana.com and Matahari.com, these tools play a crucial role in enhancing website visibility, driving customer engagement, and ultimately increasing sales. By effectively leveraging SEO to improve organic search rankings and SEM to target specific audiences through paid advertisements, these platforms can strengthen their positions in Indonesia's competitive e-commerce landscape. The insights from this study not only contribute to the growth of these businesses but also offer valuable guidance for other companies aiming to optimize their digital presence and sales in the era of digital transformation.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research is a causative approach, focusing on examining the relationship between variables. The study was conducted on the business websites Matahari.com and Ramayana.com, which provide financial reports that enable a comparison of search engine usage before and during the company's operational activities [10]. According to Saputra, the research begins with a literature review that involves studying the use of search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM) in the digital environment, including the examination of relevant journals and articles as reference sources [6], [11]. This is followed by a research object review, where data is collected through observation by analyzing the websites Matahari.com and Ramayana.com as the main objects of the study.

Furthermore, the research includes site development and existing site analysis, where the implementation of SEO and SEM strategies is carried out. In terms of SEO, a site audit is conducted to assess

the current condition of the website and identify areas for improvement. On-page optimization is performed by integrating recommended keywords—typically those frequently used by consumers—across website pages, while off-page optimization focuses on distributing content through various online platforms to improve the website's ranking in search engine results. For SEM, the process involves developing a search strategy that compares organic and paid search approaches, optimizing the use of target keywords in marketing campaigns, and leveraging backlinks as well as social media links to enhance website visibility and usability in search engines.

The final stage of the research is sales evaluation, which assesses the company's sales performance in relation to the implementation of SEO and SEM strategies. By analyzing how these strategies improve website visibility and user engagement, this stage demonstrates the effectiveness of digital marketing tools in increasing overall sales. Overall, the research methodology presents a systematic approach to understanding the impact of SEO and SEM on sales performance through detailed observation and analysis of Matahari.com and Ramayana.com [12]. By integrating theoretical studies, data collection, and the practical application of SEO and SEM strategies, this research provides a comprehensive evaluation of how digital marketing tools influence website visibility and contribute to business growth in the digital marketplace [13], [14].

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section contains the data characteristic of subject/object/sample/respondent, data analysis result, instrument, and hypothesis testing results (if any), the answer to the research question, findings, and interpretation. This section, if possible, can be graphed for each research variable. Furthermore, the descriptive statistic value was presented (e.g., Mean, SD, Maximum, Minimum) with its interpretation. At the end of the section showed the hypothesis research result and its discussion completely. In the discussion part, the manuscript should compare the research results with previous research results. Research implications and future direction are allowed to be presented.

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Implementation of Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

This research was conducted on the websites Ramayana.com and Matahari.com. The implementation of search engine optimization (SEO) testing involves the following steps:

A. Site Audit

A site audit examines and reviews each element of the website. These elements are carefully analyzed to ensure they function effectively, making it easier for consumers to transact using the company's website.



Figure 2. Ramayana Website Design

Source: <https://ramayana.co.id/>

Ramayana website also provides information about Ramayana stores located throughout Indonesia.



Figure 3. Matahari Website Design

Source: : <https://www.matahari.com/>

On the Matahari website, the content is well-structured and easy to navigate, featuring sections such as Women, Men, Kids, Shoes, Beauty, Sports, Brands, and Promotions. The Matahari website also includes information about stores located across Indonesia.

B. On-page Optimization

On-page optimization involves optimizing the website based on an analysis using several recommended keywords. The researcher entered the keyword "beli baju pria" on Google. This keyword is widely used by male consumers when making clothing purchases.

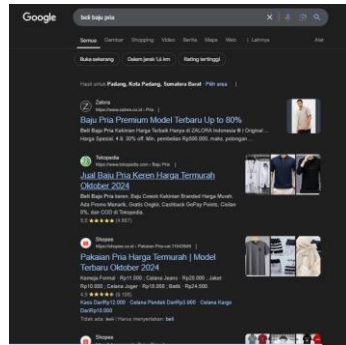


Figure 4. Keyword Results of “beli baju pria”

The image above illustrates that, on the first page of Google search results for the keyword "buy men's clothes," neither the Ramayana.com nor the Matahari.com website appears. The Matahari.com website can only be found on the second page of Google search results, while the Ramayana.com website appears on the third page. This indicates that the site indexing on both Ramayana.com and Matahari.com has not been optimized effectively. The information presented on these websites has not yet utilized proper search engine optimization (SEO).

C. Off-page Optimization

Off-page optimization is the most important element in search engines as it contains unique information.

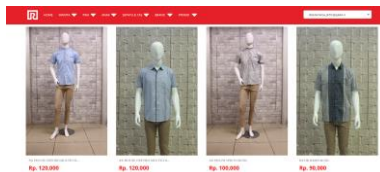


Figure 5. Ramayana’s Product Source: <https://ramayana.co.id/>

The Ramayana.com website uses off-page optimization but at a standard quality. This makes it difficult for search engines to find information about the products being sold. The Ramayana.com website has not effectively utilized search engine optimization, making it potentially less competitive compared to its rival, Matahari.com.

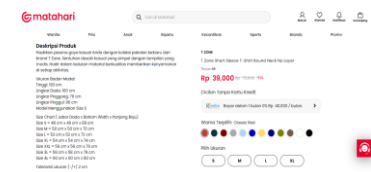


Figure 6. Matahari’s Product Source : <https://www.matahari.com/>

The information presented on the Matahari.com website is very comprehensive, making it easier for search engines to locate the website. Matahari.com has effectively utilized search engine optimization, striving to compete with other competitors. This optimization helps the website achieve higher rankings in search engines by using a variety of keywords.

Ramayana.com is promoted through social media, and similarly, Matahari.com can also be found on social media. The Instagram account of Ramayana Department Store has 776,000 followers with more than 7,700 posts as of October 22, 2024. In comparison, the Instagram account of Matahari Department Store has 1.8 million followers with only 186 posts. In this case, Matahari Department Store demonstrates a stronger advantage in utilizing social media.

4.1.2 Implementation of Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

A. Search Strategy

Search strategy involves formulating an accurate search strategy aligned with the business by comparing organic search and paid search strategies. The companies managing Ramayana Department Store and Matahari Department Store have not yet fully optimized their websites for business transactions. This is evident from the search results on search engines like Google, where these websites do not appear for relevant product purchase keywords. Instead, Google tends to prioritize e-commerce platforms with higher promotional efforts. To address this, the companies should focus on identifying keywords related to their products, creating domains relevant to the keywords, and improving the website's content design. The website content should be user-friendly and easy to navigate.

B. Target Keyword

Target keywords refer to the optimization of website content for sales promotions by creating a list of target keywords to be used in marketing. These keywords are closely related to the products being sold and their offline sales locations. This strategy has been implemented by Ramayana's website, but it is limited by its simplistic initial design. In contrast, Matahari.com has designed its website more effectively, allowing consumers to conduct transactions directly without intermediaries. Data on visit times for Ramayana.com and Matahari.com obtained from Google Trends indicates this difference.

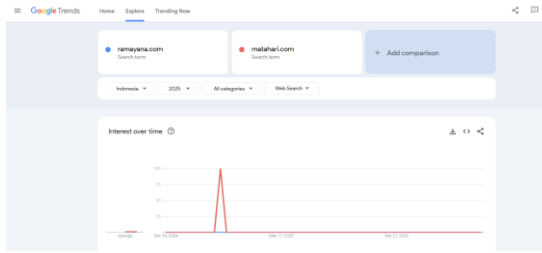


Figure 7. Comparison of Search Interest Over Time: Ramayana and Matahari
Source: Google Trends 2025 [15]

Based on the Google Trends data for 2025 in Indonesia, both ramayana.com and matahari.com exhibit very low search interest throughout most of the observed period, indicating minimal reliance on direct search behavior for accessing these websites. However, matahari.com shows a single, sharp spike reaching the maximum index (100), which suggests a temporary surge in public attention likely driven by a specific promotional campaign, seasonal event, or intensive SEM activity. In contrast, ramayana.com remains consistently flat without any significant increase, reflecting weak search engine visibility and limited digital engagement through search-based channels. Overall, the pattern indicates that Matahari has a stronger capability to generate short-term search traffic through campaign-driven strategies, while Ramayana lacks both sustained SEO performance and impactful SEM stimulation, and both platforms generally depend on alternative channels beyond search engines for consumer access.

C. Backlink Sites and Social Media

Backlink sites and social media refer to links from other websites that can be optimized to facilitate internet usage for search engine purposes. On the Ramayana.com website, no other websites were found that could assist in finding information on the site. In contrast, the Matahari.com website includes links to other websites that are helpful for transactions, such as payment applications or shipment tracking websites

4.1.3 Sales Evaluation

This research aims to compare the use of search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM) implemented by the companies. The evaluation is marked by profit changes observed after the website launch. The Ramayana.com website began operating in 2020, while the Matahari.com website has been operational since 2015. The comparison of profits for Ramayana Department Store before and during the use

of search engine-based websites is presented in the following table.

Tabel 2. Profit Comparison of Ramayana and Matahari Department Store

Year	Ramayana Profit (Rp)	Growth (%)	Matahari Profit (Rp)	Growth (%)
2017	4,786,508,000,000	-6.01	17,496,300,000,000	1.17
2018	4,805,123,000,000	0.39	17,824,900,000,000	1.88
2019	4,578,951,000,000	-4.71	10,300,000,000,000	-42.21
2020	2,527,951,000,000	-44.79	-1,300,000,000,000	-112.62
2021	2,592,682,000,000	2.56	913,000,000,000	170.23
2022	2,996,613,000,000	15.58	1,365,000,000,000	49.50
2023	2,744,427,000,000	-8.42	1,900,000,000,000	39.19
2024	3,141,000,000,000	14.45	2,100,000,000,000	10.53
2025*	2,730,000,000,000	-13.09	1,800,000,000,000	-14.29

Source: Proceed Data [16]

The profit comparison between Ramayana and Matahari from 2017 to 2025 shows two distinct performance patterns. Ramayana demonstrates relatively more stable financial performance, with moderate fluctuations and a significant decline during 2020 due to the pandemic, followed by gradual recovery in 2021–2024, although growth remains inconsistent and slightly declines again in 2025. In contrast, Matahari exhibits a more volatile trend, with strong performance prior to 2019, a sharp drop into negative profit in 2020, and a faster recovery in the following years, indicating higher sensitivity to external shocks but also a stronger rebound capability. Overall, while Ramayana reflects stability with slower growth, Matahari shows a high-risk, high-recovery pattern, suggesting differences in business strategy, market positioning, and responsiveness to changing retail conditions.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of SEO and SEM on Ramayana.com and Matahari.com has not yet been fully optimized to support strong digital visibility and sustained online sales growth. The results from the on-page optimization analysis show that both websites fail to appear on the first page of search engine results for relevant keywords, which confirms that their SEO strategies are still relatively weak. This finding is consistent with previous

studies, such as Ningsih and Zulmy, which emphasize that effective keyword optimization and content structuring are critical in increasing search visibility and driving website traffic [2], [3].

Furthermore, the Google Trends analysis reveals that consumer search behavior toward both websites is generally low, with Matahari.com experiencing only temporary spikes driven by specific campaigns. This suggests that SEM activities may generate short-term visibility but are not sufficient to maintain consistent user engagement without strong SEO support. This aligns with Darmayanti, who highlights that SEM is effective in boosting traffic quickly but requires integration with organic strategies to ensure long-term performance [4].

From the sales evaluation perspective, the profit trends show that Ramayana demonstrates more stable but slower growth, while Matahari exhibits higher volatility with a stronger recovery after the pandemic. These differences reflect how each company responds to market dynamics and digital transformation. Despite Matahari's ability to generate higher engagement during campaign periods, its fluctuating performance indicates reliance on external stimuli rather than sustainable digital strategies. On the other hand, Ramayana's relatively stable performance suggests a more conservative approach but also highlights limitations in leveraging digital marketing tools effectively.

Overall, the findings suggest that both companies have not yet maximized the potential of SEO and SEM integration. A more strategic combination of long-term SEO optimization and targeted SEM campaigns is necessary to improve search visibility, enhance user engagement, and ultimately drive consistent sales growth in the digital marketplace.

5 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of SEO and SEM on Ramayana.com and Matahari.com has not yet been fully effective in optimizing online sales performance. Both websites demonstrate low search engine visibility, as evidenced by their inability to rank on the first page of search results and the generally low search interest observed in Google Trends data. While Matahari.com shows a stronger ability to generate short-term search traffic through promotional campaigns, its performance remains inconsistent. In contrast, Ramayana.com exhibits more stable but limited growth, indicating a lack of strong digital marketing stimulation.

The findings highlight that SEO plays a crucial role in maintaining long-term visibility, while SEM is more effective in creating temporary increases in traffic. Therefore, companies need to integrate both strategies to achieve sustainable digital performance. Improving keyword optimization, enhancing website structure,

increasing backlink quality, and utilizing targeted advertising campaigns are essential steps to strengthen online presence and drive higher sales. This study provides practical insights for businesses in the retail sector to optimize their digital marketing strategies in an increasingly competitive online environment.

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