

EMPOWERING MSMEs ACTORS THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

This community empowerment study aims to enhance the digital marketing capabilities of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Pringrejo Village, West Pekalongan District, Pekalongan City. The rapid growth of digital technology and shifts in consumer behavior toward online shopping require MSMEs to adapt and build digital readiness. This program applies a community-empowerment methodology that integrates tutorial sessions, hands-on practice, and live-streaming simulations across multiple e-commerce and social media platforms. In addition, the program adopts Community-Based Research (CBR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), and Service Learning (SL) to ensure participatory engagement, local asset mobilization, and sustainable learning outcomes. A retrospective post-test survey was administered to evaluate changes in participants' knowledge and skills before and after the training. The results indicate that 80% of participants had never attended similar training, highlighting a digital literacy gap. Post-training evaluations showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding, with an average score of 4.35 on a 5-point scale, and 96% of participants reported comprehension of the material. These findings demonstrate that the participatory digital marketing training model effectively improves MSMEs' digital competencies and supports market expansion through e-commerce channels. The program contributes to strengthening MSMEs' resilience and competitiveness in the digital era while offering a replicable empowerment model for other rural business communities.

Keywords : MSMEs, digital marketing, e-commers

JEL Classification : L26, L81, M31, O33

1. INTRODUCTION

Pringrejo Village is the result of a merger of Pringlangu, Tegalorejo, and Bumirejo Villages in West Pekalongan District, Central Java. This district is recorded as having 242 MSMEs (Yandip, 2023) with the largest batik production potential among other districts, with Pringrejo being the main batik center (Haidar, 2016). Although batik still dominates, other businesses such as culinary are also starting to develop. However, amid this potential, most MSMEs in Pringrejo still face limitations in mastering digital competencies, particularly in utilizing online marketing. This gap hinders the ability of MSMEs to expand their market and compete in the era of digital transformation.

The problems faced by MSMEs in Pringrejo Village are essentially similar to those faced by MSMEs in Indonesia in general. A 2022 survey by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) showed that one of the main obstacles facing MSMEs in the digital era is low technological literacy. This condition results in a limited understanding of digital marketing strategies (Yukk, 2023). The 2022 MSME Empowerment Report noted that approximately 70% of MSMEs still experience difficulties marketing their products. This problem is becoming increasingly pressing given the government's target of 30 million MSMEs going digital by 2024 as part of the national economic transformation agenda (Kominfo, 2024). However, the gap between low MSMEs' technological literacy and the demand of accelerated digitalization indicates the need for more targeted training interventions based on local needs. Therefore, this research is relevant to bridge this gap, particularly in the context of MSMEs' empowerment through increased digital marketing capacity.

Access to information in the digital era is becoming increasingly open, along with increasing internet penetration. According to a report by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024), Indonesia's internet penetration rate reached 79.5% in 2024, representing a 1.4% increase compared to the previous year. While this figure represents positive progress, Indonesia still lags behind Malaysia and Thailand, which have 93.8% and 88.3%, respectively (Kominfo, 2022). The gap is also evident in the level of digital adoption between urban and rural areas, directly impacting the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs in urban areas are quicker to adapt to digital platforms, while those in rural areas still face limited access to infrastructure and digital literacy. Thus, increasing internet penetration presents a significant opportunity for MSME empowerment, but also requires policy strategies capable of bridging the digital divide between regions.

The large number of internet users in Indonesia presents both an opportunity and a challenge for MSMEs, particularly those in Pringrejo. This means they can utilize online media to market their products. The challenge is that Pringrejo MSMEs are required to have an understanding and skills in several digital marketing platforms widely used in Indonesia. Without developing these skills, MSMEs' marketing will be left behind by those using digital marketing.



Figure 1. Speakers and the Head of Pringrejo Village

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of strengthening digital capacity for MSMEs in navigating the dynamics of the digital economy. Alviani & Munawaroh (2025) emphasized that digital transformation is a strategic factor in increasing MSME competitiveness in an increasingly competitive market. Digital training is a key instrument for accelerating business actors' adaptability to new technologies (Alviani & Munawaroh, 2025). Consistent with these findings, Satriadi et al. (2022) demonstrated that digital marketing mentoring and training for Pondok Etam MSMEs increased the use of social media as a marketing tool, which in turn expanded market reach (Satriadi et al., 2022).

A study by Adinugraha et al. (2021) specifically focused on the Pekalongan Batik Center also revealed that the use of digital marketing strategies, particularly through the optimization of digital content and marketplaces, significantly increased sales turnover (Adinugraha et al., 2021). This finding is supported by the findings of Elim et al. (2024) in Kupang City, which demonstrated that digital marketing adoption positively contributed to MSME business growth, including increased

customer numbers and revenue. Meanwhile, Juliandra et al. (2024) identified that the use of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook significantly increased the visibility and sales of MSME products in Pekanbaru post-pandemic (Juliandra et al., 2024).

Furthermore, digital literacy is also a crucial factor in the success of MSMEs' digital transformation. Fridayani and Chiang (2022) emphasized that technological literacy and access to digital training are key determinants of MSMEs' ability to optimally utilize digital opportunities (Fridayani & Chiang, 2022). This perspective aligns with the UTAUT theoretical approach proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), which states that technology adoption is influenced by expected benefits, ease of use, social influence, and infrastructure support (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

In general, previous research findings indicate that digital marketing training and increased digital literacy play a strategic role in supporting the digital acceleration of MSMEs. These findings reinforce the urgency of a digital marketing training program for Pringrejo MSMEs as an effort to increase digital marketing capacity, expand market access, and strengthen business sustainability in the digital era.

The novelty of this research lies in the digital marketing training model based on live streaming simulations on various e-commerce and social media platforms, combined with retrospective post-test evaluation and follow-up consultation sessions after the training. This approach was applied to the batik MSME community in Pringrejo Village, Pekalongan, a center for culturally based MSMEs that still face digital literacy challenges. This approach offers a new contribution to the literature on MSME empowerment through digitalization, especially for traditional business sectors affected by the acceleration of the digital economy.

Based on the problems described above, this community service aims to evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing training and mentoring in improving the digital competence of MSMEs in Pringrejo Village, as measured by indicators of improving skills in using social media to market their products. This activity is a continuation of the previous program that focused on training in preparing financial reports using SME Accounting applications. With good bookkeeping skills and the implementation of digital marketing strategies, MSMEs in Pringrejo Village can become more resilient, competitive, and develop sustainably.

2. LITERATURE RIVIEW

The rapid development of digital technology in the era of globalization has brought about significant changes in business activities, including in the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector. One significant change is the use of digital marketing, defined as a marketing strategy that utilizes digital platforms to reach consumers more effectively and efficiently (Adinugraha et al., 2021). In line with the view of Adinugraha et al. (2021), digital marketing is understood as promotional activities and market discovery through digital media, utilizing online social networks. Shifts in consumer behaviour, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, have further accelerated the transition to online shopping, with a 39.5% increase among younger age groups. This situation requires MSMEs to be more adaptive in understanding new consumption patterns while simultaneously improving their digital marketing skills.

The theoretical framework of technology adoption provides relevant insights to explain these challenges. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) emphasizes that technology acceptance is strongly influenced by

perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Meanwhile, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) highlights performance expectations, effort expectations, social influence, and supporting conditions as determinants of technology adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In the context of PKM activities, these theories provide the basis that the success of digital marketing training is closely related to the extent to which MSMEs understand the practical benefits of technology and its ease of use in daily business.

Empirical findings also demonstrate that digital marketing plays a crucial role in improving MSME performance. Satriadi et al. (2022) report that the use of social media has a significant impact on increased sales. Cecilli and Satriadi et al. (2022) emphasize that digital marketing can expand consumer reach, facilitate real-time communication, and provide accurate data for business decision-making. Elim et al. (2024) added that digital marketing drives market expansion and improves business sustainability. However, most studies still focus on the general benefits of digital marketing, while studies on the effectiveness of PKM-based training in improving MSMEs' digital competencies are still limited.

Based on this description, this community service activity is positioned to address the needs of MSMEs in developing digital marketing skills. Drawing on technology adoption theory and Human Capital Theory, the training activities not only focus on improving technical knowledge but also aim to strengthen MSMEs' sustainable capacity to face the challenges of the digital market.

3. METHODOLOGY

This community service activity is designed through four main stages: tutorials, practice, live streaming, and evaluation. In the first stage,

participants are provided with material on the basic concepts of digital marketing and e-commerce, as well as an introduction to popular platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, TikTok, and Facebook. The material is delivered interactively to broaden MSMEs' knowledge of digital marketing opportunities.

The second stage involves hands-on practice, where participants are guided through creating accounts, uploading products, and optimising product descriptions and photos on marketplaces and social media.



Figure 2. Presentation by the first speaker

In the third stage, participants were trained to use the live streaming feature as an interactive marketing strategy on Shopee, Tokopedia, TikTok, and Facebook.



Figure 3. Presentation by the second speaker

To measure the effectiveness of the training, this activity used a retrospective post-test evaluation design. At the end, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing their level of understanding before and after the training. This design allowed for comparison of participants' perceptions of their knowledge and skills gains, thus illustrating the changes resulting from the training. Furthermore, an evaluation was conducted using a satisfaction and follow-up questionnaire. This questionnaire aimed to gather feedback on the training materials, methods, and areas for further development. Data was analyzed descriptively and quantitatively to assess improvements in digital competency, as well as qualitatively through observation notes and participant comments.

Beyond the formal training phase, the community service team also provided consultation sessions for participants who were still facing challenges in implementing digital marketing. This mechanism ensured the sustainability of the program's impact and provided space for more personalized mentoring tailored to the needs of MSMEs.

In addition to the tutorial, practice, live streaming simulation and retrospective evaluation approaches, this activity also uses a comprehensive community empowerment-based methodological approach, namely Community-Based Research (CBR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), And Service Learning (SL).

First, the method Community-Based Research (CBR) This approach involves directly involving Pringrejo MSMEs as partners in the process of identifying digital needs, developing training materials, and evaluating activity results. This approach ensures that activities align with the community's real needs and facilitates collaboration between academics and the community (Israel et al., 1998).

Second, the approach Participatory Action Research (PAR) This is implemented through the active involvement of participants in the training process, field practice, open discussions, and joint reflection on the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategies they have tried. Participants act not only as training objects but also as knowledge contributors based on their respective business experiences (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Third, the approach Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) This approach is used by starting with empowering the local potential already possessed by the Pringrejo MSME community, such as batik production experience, informal marketing networks, and local cultural identity as a digital promotional force. This approach maximizes local advantages as primary social capital, rather than solely focusing on limitations (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Fourth, the model Service Learning (SL) This is implemented through the

involvement of academics in providing direct training and ongoing mentoring, fostering a reciprocal learning process between academics and MSMEs. This activity not only benefits the community but also provides a practical learning space for universities to apply their knowledge in the field (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

By integrating these four approaches, digital marketing training activities not only target improving the technical competency of MSMEs but also build community capacity in a participatory, sustainable, and local asset-based manner to support business resilience in the digital era.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The digital marketing training was attended by 25 participants from 30 invited MSMEs under the guidance of Pringrejo Village, Pekalongan. According to Table 2, the training participants were 14 (56%) male and 11 (44%) female. Table 1 shows that the average age of participants (A) was 30.56 years, with a range of 17 to 50 years.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Participants

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std.D
Age (A)	17	50	30,56	9,96
Implementation (I)	8	20	16,20	2,66
Material Mastery (M)	12	20	17,40	2,04
Level of Understanding (U)	12	20	17,56	2,08
Number of Participants (N)	(25)			

Furthermore, the implementation of the activities (I) had an average rating of 16.20, with a range of 8 to 20. The implementation of this training activity was generally considered good or satisfactory by participants, with a score of 4.4 (16.20: 4) on a Likert scale of 1-5. The resource person's

mastery of the material (M) averaged 17.40, with a range of 12 to 20. It indicates that the resource person's mastery of the material was assessed by participants as good and was given a score of 4.35 (17.40: 4). The participants had an average level of understanding (U) of 17.56, with a range of 12 to 20. It indicates a good understanding of the material presented by the resource person, with a score of 4.39 (17.56: 4).

Table 2. Frequency Table of Participants

Variable		Category	Freq.
Gender (G)	Female	11	44
	Male	14	56
Previous Similar Training (PS)	No	20	80
	Yes	5	20
Participants' Understanding (PU)	Do not understand	1	4
	Understand	24	96

Furthermore, the level of participant understanding is also indicated by the dummy variable (PU) in Table 2, where 24 (96%) participants stated they understood, and 1 (4%) stated they did not understand the material presented by the resource person. Furthermore, 20 (80%) participants stated they had never participated in similar training (PS), while 5 (20%) stated they had. It means that the majority of MSME participants had never participated in digital marketing training.

The participant assessments above indicate that the implementation was good, with a good level of understanding. It means that the digital marketing training received a positive response from the participants. They increasingly understood that selling through e-commerce platforms, including Shopee, Tokopedia, TikTok, and Facebook, is crucial for MSMEs. They gained several benefits, including:

- 1) Wider market access. E-commerce enables MSMEs to reach consumers throughout Indonesia and even abroad. The MSME

market is not limited to the local market but is vast, increasing sales turnover.

- 2) Affordable marketing costs. Marketing or advertising through e-commerce is cheaper than traditional methods such as TV, radio, and billboards. Platforms like Shopee, Tokopedia, TikTok, and Facebook can offer specific options for reaching their target consumers, making it easier for MSMEs to reach their desired consumers.
- 3) Flexibility and efficiency. E-commerce platforms offer significant flexibility for MSMEs when managing online stores. They can operate anytime and anywhere. This is highly efficient for MSMEs with limited resources, such as employees and physical store space.

In addition, e-commerce also offers specific features to attract and serve consumers, such as discounts, promotions, and product reviews. MSMEs can also analyse consumer behaviour, market trends, and product preferences because e-commerce provides them with useful data and analytics.

MSMEs' understanding of digital marketing is crucial because digital technology has changed the nature and character of business models (Nambisan, 2017). MSMEs must undertake digital transformation to increase business competitiveness and expand market share (Solechan et al., 2023) to increase sales turnover.

Several studies have shown that digital marketing can increase sales turnover. Juliandra et al. (2024) found that the use of digital marketing increased sales among MSMEs in Pekanbaru. Most MSMEs in Pekanbaru use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok because content distribution on these three platforms can more easily go viral, making their products more widely known. Angelita & Kramadibrata

(2024) found that selling prices and sales through digital marketing by Metro Tanah Abang traders had a significant positive impact on sales turnover. Elim et al. (2024) also found that the use of digital marketing in Kupang City can impact sales growth, revenue, market reach, and increase the number of customers. Mangifera & Mawardi (2022) found that digital transformation of food and beverage MSMEs in business development is crucial for managing businesses and improving performance.

These research results indicate that digital marketing training for MSMEs in Pringrejo is highly appropriate and meets their current needs. Digital marketing skills need to be continuously encouraged and trained in line with the rapid growth of features on various online transaction platforms. Similarly, Fridayani & Chiang (2022) stated that MSMEs need to be encouraged to utilise digital platforms, and they need. The digital competency of MSMEs needs to be improved through training because MSMEs' resources are a factor in determining whether the use of social media and e-commerce can be managed well and have implications for increasing sales turnover (Trulline, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION, LMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

The digital marketing training in Pringrejo Village went smoothly, according to planned objectives, and received a positive response from MSMEs, most of whom had never attended similar training. Participants actively engaged in discussions and hands-on practice using digital platforms such as Shopee, TikTok, Tokopedia, and Facebook. The results showed that this training not only improved short-term understanding but also served as a foundation for sustainable business capacity development. The three-step framework, conceptual understanding, direct practice, and

participatory interaction can serve as a model for similar training in other MSME communities.

However, this activity was limited in terms of regional coverage and the number of participants, necessitating wider replication and long-term evaluation to assess sustainability. Furthermore, partners are advised to implement the training diligently. Failure to do so could result in a decline in sales due to the shift in consumer behaviour from traditional to online shopping. Furthermore, partners are expected to continuously innovate in their products and marketing by responsively and adaptively following developments in the digital world.

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