



Utilization of Social Media to Support Digital Marketing in Village Communities and Village MSMEs

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Keywords:

social media,
digital marketing,
MSMEs,
pokmas

ABSTRACT

Utilizing social media is crucial in supporting digital marketing for Community Groups (Pokmas) and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) during digital transformation. This community service activity aims to improve MSMEs' and Pokmas members' ability to use social media as a marketing tool for local products in Hargosari Village, Sine District, Ngawi Regency. The methods included outreach, training, mentoring, and evaluation through interviews, observations, and focus group discussions.

Activity results showed that using Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp improved participants' knowledge and skills in digital marketing. Market reach expanded and interaction with consumers increased. Participants also became more able to create engaging and informative promotional content. Challenges included limited digital literacy and suboptimal marketing feature use.

Through this activity, MSMEs and Pokmas gained understanding and practical skills in using social media for digital marketing. Therefore, ongoing mentoring is needed to ensure the sustainability and optimization of social media utilization in supporting the competitiveness of MSMEs in rural areas.

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Peer review under responsibility of Lembaga Penelitian & Pengabdian Masyarakat Univ. Amikom Yogyakarta.

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<https://doi.org/10.24076/swagati.2026v4i1.2666>

1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has driven digital transformation across various sectors, including marketing. Social media has become a strategic platform for digital marketing, thanks to its ability to reach consumers widely, quickly, and at relatively low cost. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp have been widely utilized by businesses to build relationships with consumers and increase product visibility [1][2].

For Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), social media serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a means to build customer relationships and enhance business competitiveness. MSMEs play a crucial role in the national

economy, particularly in employment absorption and contribution to gross domestic product [3][4]. However, many MSMEs still face limitations in adopting digital technology, particularly related to digital literacy and technology-based marketing capabilities [1].

In rural areas, such as Hargosari Village, Sine District, Ngawi Regency, social media utilization by Community Groups (Pokmas) and MSMEs is still suboptimal. This is due to several factors, including a lack of understanding of digital marketing strategies, limited ability to create creative content, and minimal assistance in using digital technology. Effective use of social media can increase market reach, strengthen local product branding, and boost sales [5].

This community service activity was implemented as an effort to address these issues through training and mentoring programs on the use of social media for digital marketing.

The approach used focused not only on increasing knowledge but also on strengthening practical skills in managing content and optimally utilizing social media features. Thus, it is hoped that MSMEs and Pokmas in Hargosari Village will be able to implement digital marketing strategies independently and sustainably.

Based on the description above, the purpose of this community service activity is to increase the capacity of MSMEs and Pokmas members to utilize social media as a digital marketing tool and to encourage the competitiveness of local products in rural areas.

2. Method

The community service activity was implemented in Hargosari Village, Sine District, Ngawi Regency, involving Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and members of Community Groups (Pokmas) as the primary participants. The program applied a participatory action approach that emphasized the active involvement of community partners in every stage of the activity, including problem identification, planning, implementation, mentoring, monitoring, and evaluation. This approach was selected because participatory methods are considered more effective in community empowerment programs, particularly in strengthening digital literacy and encouraging sustainable behavioral change among rural communities [6]. In addition, the participatory model enabled the program to adapt to the real conditions and capacities of local MSMEs, ensuring that the training materials and mentoring strategies were relevant to participants' needs and business characteristics [11].

The implementation method consisted of five integrated stages: (1) preliminary assessment and problem mapping, (2) socialization and digital awareness building, (3) practice-based training, (4) intensive mentoring and implementation assistance, and (5) monitoring and evaluation. The novelty of this program lies in the integration of digital marketing literacy, hands-on social media content production, and sustainability-based mentoring using a community-driven learning model [13][15]. Unlike conventional training programs that generally focus only on one-time workshops, this activity combined experiential learning, continuous mentoring, and participatory evaluation to ensure the sustainability of digital marketing adoption among MSMEs and Pokmas members.

In the first stage, a preliminary assessment was conducted through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and baseline surveys involving MSME actors and community group representatives. The assessment aimed to identify participants' initial digital literacy levels, patterns of social media use, barriers to digital marketing adoption, and the specific needs of each business group. Data obtained from this stage were used to design contextualized training materials and mentoring strategies. This needs-based approach is essential in community empowerment because rural MSMEs often face limitations in digital skills, access to technology, and content management capabilities [7] [14]. The findings from this stage indicated that most participants only used WhatsApp for communication purposes and had not optimized social media platforms for promotional and branding activities.

The second stage focused on socialization and awareness building regarding the importance of digital transformation and social media utilization for business development. Participants were introduced to the concept of digital marketing, online consumer behavior, branding strategies, and the role of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business in improving market reach and competitiveness [2]. This stage also emphasized the importance of consistency in content production, audience engagement, and digital communication ethics. Interactive discussion methods were employed to encourage participants to share their experiences and challenges in promoting products digitally. This process helped participants better understand the practical relevance of digital marketing for rural economic development.

The third stage involved practice-based training using the learning-by-doing approach. Participants directly practiced creating business accounts on social media platforms, developing digital catalogs, taking attractive product photographs using smartphones, designing promotional content with simple digital applications, writing persuasive captions, and utilizing social media features such as hashtags, stories, reels, and business analytics. The training also introduced participants to content scheduling techniques and strategies for increasing audience interaction. This experiential approach was chosen because practical engagement has been proven effective in improving digital competencies and technology adoption among adult learners and community-based business actors [1] [12]. Furthermore, the hands-on activities enabled participants to immediately apply the acquired knowledge to their respective businesses.

Following the training phase, intensive mentoring was conducted over several weeks to assist participants in implementing digital marketing strategies consistently. Mentoring activities included individualized consultation, content review sessions, assistance in managing social media accounts, and feedback on promotional content quality. Participants were guided to improve visual branding, posting consistency, customer interaction, and the use of analytics features to evaluate audience engagement. This mentoring phase represents one of the innovative aspects of the program because it moved beyond short-term training and focused on building sustainable digital marketing practices among participants [5]. Continuous assistance also helped reduce participants' technological anxiety and increased their confidence in operating social media independently.

To strengthen program effectiveness, a structured monitoring and evaluation system was developed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Evaluation was not only conducted at the end of the activity but also integrated into each implementation stage through formative and summative evaluation mechanisms. Formative evaluation was carried out during the training and mentoring process to identify participants' progress, learning difficulties, and implementation obstacles. Meanwhile, summative evaluation was conducted at the end of the program to measure the overall impact of the intervention.

The evaluation instruments included pre-test and post-test questionnaires, observation sheets, digital content assessment rubrics, interviews, documentation analysis, and

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The pre-test and post-test instruments were used to measure improvements in participants' digital literacy, understanding of social media marketing concepts, and technical competencies in content creation. Observation sheets were used to assess participants' practical abilities during training sessions, including their capability to create accounts, upload promotional content, and interact with consumers digitally. In addition, content assessment rubrics were employed to evaluate the quality of promotional materials produced by participants based on visual appearance, message clarity, creativity, and consistency of branding.

FGDs were conducted at the final stage to explore participants' experiences, perceived benefits, implementation challenges, and sustainability plans after the program completion. This evaluation approach enabled the researchers to capture not only measurable skill improvements but also behavioral and mindset changes related to digital entrepreneurship. The success indicators of the program included: (1) increased digital literacy scores between pre-test and post-test results, (2) increased participant ability in producing promotional content independently, (3) active utilization of social media platforms for business promotion, (4) increased frequency and consistency of digital marketing activities, and (5) improved participant confidence in engaging with online consumers.

The overall methodological framework of the activity can be illustrated in the following diagram:

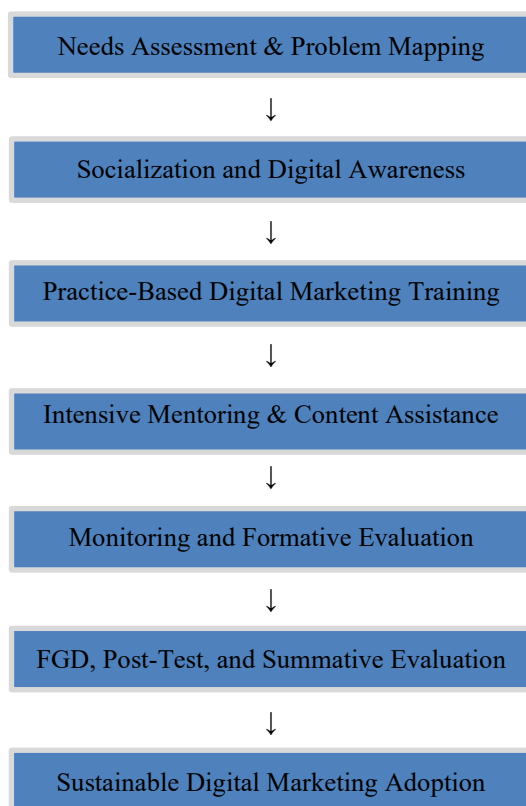


Diagram 1. Framework of the Activity

Through this comprehensive and participatory methodology, the program is expected to create sustainable impacts on the digital capacity development of MSMEs and

Community Groups (Pokmas) in rural areas. The integration of participatory learning, hands-on digital practice, continuous mentoring, and multi-method evaluation provides a more innovative and sustainable model for community-based digital empowerment programs[4].

3. Result and Discussion

The implementation of community service activities in Hargosari Village, Sine District, Ngawi Regency, demonstrated an increase in the capacity of MSMEs and Community Group (Pokmas) members to utilize social media as a digital marketing tool. Before the activity, most participants still used social media limitedly, primarily for personal communication, and had not yet optimized its business functions. This aligns with the finding that low digital literacy is a major obstacle to MSME adoption of digital marketing [4].

After socialization, training, and mentoring, participants began to understand the importance of digital marketing strategies and were able to implement the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp as promotional tools. This improvement was evident in their ability to create business accounts, consistently upload product content, and utilize features like stories, marketplaces, and groups to expand their marketing reach. This supports Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) assertion that social media can be an effective tool for building interactive communication between businesses and consumers.



Fig. 1. Participant Mobilization

In terms of skills, participants demonstrated improvement in creating more engaging promotional content, both visually and narratively. Content that was previously simple and less informative has evolved into a more structured approach, with better use of product photos and persuasive captions. A practice-based training approach has proven effective in improving participants' digital competency, as Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) noted that hands-on learning can accelerate the adoption of digital skills.

Furthermore, mentoring results showed increased interaction with consumers, as indicated by the increase in responses, comments, and requests for product information. This indicates that utilizing social media not only increases

product visibility but also strengthens customer relationships. According to Tuten and Solomon (2017), active interaction through social media is key to building consumer loyalty in the digital age [1][2][5][6].

However, several obstacles remain for participants, such as limited consistency in content creation, limited internet access in some locations, and suboptimal utilization of social media analytics features. Therefore, continued mentoring and capacity-building strategies are needed to ensure sustainable use of social media. A sustainable empowerment approach is key to ensuring the success of community service programs [7][8].



Fig. 2. Mentoring and Capacity-Building Strategies

Overall, this community service activity had a positive impact on improving the knowledge and skills of MSMEs and Community Groups (Pokmas) in digital marketing. These findings reinforce the idea that appropriate use of social media can be an effective strategy for increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in rural areas [9][10].

4. Conclusion

The community service program conducted in Hargosari Village, Sine District, Ngawi Regency demonstrated that the integration of social media-based digital marketing training with participatory mentoring can significantly improve the digital competencies of MSMEs and Community Group (Pokmas) members. The activity not only increased participants' understanding of digital marketing concepts, but also strengthened their practical abilities in utilizing social media platforms as effective promotional and communication tools. Through a combination of socialization, hands-on training, and continuous assistance, participants became more confident in creating business accounts, producing promotional content, and interacting directly with consumers through digital platforms.

The results indicate that social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business play an important role in expanding marketing access for rural MSMEs. Before the intervention, most participants utilized social media only for personal communication and had limited understanding of its potential for branding and market expansion. After the program implementation,

participants showed significant improvement in their ability to create visually appealing content, organize promotional strategies, and maintain more consistent online engagement with customers. Several MSME actors also began to recognize the importance of visual branding, product storytelling, and consumer interaction in strengthening customer trust and increasing product visibility.

An important finding from this activity is that practical and participatory learning approaches are more effective than conventional lecture-based training in improving digital literacy among rural communities. The learning-by-doing method encouraged participants to directly apply the acquired knowledge in real business contexts, while the mentoring process reduced technological anxiety and strengthened participants' adaptability toward digital transformation. This demonstrates that digital empowerment programs for rural MSMEs require not only technical training, but also sustained facilitation that supports behavioral change and technology adoption.

The unique contribution of this activity lies in the integration of participatory empowerment, digital marketing literacy, and sustainability-oriented mentoring into a single community service model. Unlike previous programs that generally focused only on one-time training activities, this program introduced a community-based digital mentoring framework that emphasized continuous practice, direct implementation, and participatory evaluation. The model also incorporated local business characteristics and community conditions into the training design, making the intervention more contextual, adaptive, and relevant to the actual needs of rural MSMEs. This approach represents an innovative contribution to community empowerment strategies, particularly in strengthening the digital transformation capacity of village-based economic actors.

Another distinctive contribution of this program is the development of a collaborative empowerment ecosystem involving MSMEs, community groups, facilitators, and local stakeholders. Through interactive discussions and mentoring sessions, participants were encouraged not only to improve their individual business performance but also to build collective awareness regarding the importance of digital economic transformation in rural development. This collaborative approach has the potential to create sustainable community-based digital ecosystems that support local economic resilience and social innovation.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified during implementation. Some participants still experienced difficulties in operating advanced social media features, maintaining consistency in content production, and understanding digital marketing analytics. Limited internet connectivity and varying levels of digital literacy also affected the speed of technology adoption among participants. These findings indicate that the success of digital empowerment programs in rural areas is highly dependent on the availability of continuous mentoring, accessible digital infrastructure, and adaptive learning methods tailored to participants' capacities.

Therefore, this activity provides an important contribution to the development of digital-based MSME empowerment models in rural areas and can serve as a replicable framework for other regions with similar socio-economic characteristics. The combination of participatory learning,

practical training, and continuous mentoring offers a more sustainable approach for strengthening rural digital entrepreneurship and community economic resilience. In addition, the program contributes academically by enriching the implementation model of community service activities in the field of digital transformation and rural economic empowerment.

To ensure the sustainability of the program outcomes, collaboration between local governments, educational institutions, community organizations, and private sector stakeholders is strongly recommended. Continuous mentoring programs should be developed to support MSMEs in improving content quality, branding strategies, and digital consumer engagement. Furthermore, strengthening digital infrastructure, improving internet accessibility, and providing affordable technological facilities are necessary to support broader digital inclusion in rural areas.

Future community service activities are also recommended to expand the scope of digital marketing platforms by incorporating TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and e-commerce marketplaces such as Shopee and Tokopedia. The integration of short-video marketing strategies and marketplace optimization may further enhance product visibility and market expansion opportunities for rural MSMEs. In addition, future programs may include training on digital financial management, online customer service, and social media analytics to strengthen the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of village-based enterprises in the digital economy era.

5. Acknowledgements

Thanks and appreciation to Politeknik Negeri Madiun (DIPA 023.18.2.677632/2026), Local Government Desa Hargosari Kecamatan Sine Kabupaten Ngawi, and students of the Business Administration Dept.

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