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Enhancing MSME Marketing Capability through Digital-Based Mentoring in the Processed Food Sector

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Abstract

This community service program aims to enhance the marketing capability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through digital-based mentoring in the processed food sector. The main problem faced by MSMEs is the limited ability to utilize digital platforms for marketing activities, resulting in restricted market reach and low competitiveness. The program employed a participatory approach consisting of training, practical implementation, and intensive mentoring focused on digital marketing strategies, branding, and content development. The activity involved 30 MSME actors and was conducted in West Jakarta. The results show a significant improvement in participants' understanding and skills in using digital platforms, managing marketing content, and strengthening product branding. In addition, there was a shift in marketing practices from conventional methods to more structured and digital-based approaches, leading to broader market reach and greater business opportunities. Therefore, digital-based mentoring is proven to be an effective and practical approach to improve MSME marketing capabilities and support business transformation toward more competitive and sustainable market development.

Keyword: MSMEs; digital marketing; marketing capability; branding; market expansion

INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in economic development, particularly in generating employment and improving community welfare (World Bank, 2019). Despite their significant contribution, many MSMEs still face various challenges in business development, especially in the area of marketing. These limitations result in low product competitiveness and restricted market access. One of the key factors influencing MSME performance is marketing capability, which refers to the ability of firms to effectively manage marketing activities in creating and delivering value to customers (Morgan et al., 2009). MSMEs with limited marketing capability often struggle to compete, particularly in a dynamic market environment where consumer behavior continues to evolve.

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed traditional marketing practices into more modern, digital-based approaches. Digital marketing enables MSMEs to reach wider

markets at relatively lower costs and enhances the effectiveness of communication with customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). However, many MSMEs are still unable to fully utilize these opportunities due to limited knowledge and technical skills in managing digital platforms (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). In the processed food sector, marketing challenges are even more complex due to intense competition and increasing consumer demand for clear and trustworthy product information. This condition requires MSMEs not only to focus on production but also to develop effective and adaptive marketing strategies in response to technological advancements (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

These issues indicate a gap between the potential of digital marketing and the actual capability of MSME actors in implementing it. Therefore, a practical and applicable intervention is needed to improve MSME marketing capability. One relevant approach is through community service programs that focus on digital-based mentoring. Based on this background, the purpose of this community service activity is to enhance the marketing capability of MSMEs through digital-based mentoring in the processed food sector. This program is expected to support the transformation of MSME marketing practices from conventional methods to more structured and digital-based approaches, thereby improving competitiveness and expanding market reach sustainably.

METHOD

This community service program employed a participatory approach by actively involving micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) actors in all stages of the activity. The target participants were MSMEs in the processed food sector who faced limitations in utilizing digital marketing for product promotion. The program was conducted in November 2023 in West Jakarta and involved 30 MSME participants. The implementation of the program consisted of three main stages. First, the training stage aimed to improve participants' understanding of basic digital marketing concepts, branding strategies, and the use of social media as a promotional tool. Second, the practical stage provided participants with the opportunity to directly apply the knowledge gained, including creating digital marketing content and managing social media accounts. Third, the mentoring stage was carried out intensively to ensure the sustainability of digital marketing practices, including content evaluation, improvement, and consistency in brand identity development. The evaluation of the program was conducted descriptively by comparing participants' conditions before and after the implementation, particularly in terms of digital marketing understanding, social media management, and the ability to develop simple marketing strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the community service program demonstrated a noticeable improvement in the marketing capability of MSME participants after engaging in digital-based mentoring. These improvements were not only evident in technical skills related to digital platforms but also in the participants' mindset and overall marketing strategy. Prior to the program, most MSMEs relied heavily on conventional marketing methods with limited market reach, primarily confined to their local area. The use of digital platforms was minimal and unstructured, with little attention given to content creation, account management, or strategic communication. In addition, participants had limited awareness of the importance of branding in enhancing product value and attracting consumers.

Following the training and mentoring sessions, participants showed significant progress in utilizing digital platforms as marketing tools. They became more capable of creating engaging promotional content, managing social media accounts in a structured manner, and maintaining

consistency in their brand identity. This indicates that the intervention successfully strengthened the marketing capability of MSMEs, particularly in the context of digital marketing adoption.

The comparison of conditions before and after the program is presented in Table 1.

Aspect	Before	After
Marketing method	Conventional (offline)	Digital (social media)
Market reach	Limited local area	Wider (regional/national)
Marketing content	Unstructured	Planned and consistent
Product branding	Not prioritized	Improved and strengthened
Use of social media	Minimal	Active and well-managed

Based on Table 1, the program had a tangible impact on improving participants' marketing practices. The transition from conventional to digital-based marketing reflects the increasing adaptability of MSMEs to technological advancements. This finding is consistent with the notion that digital marketing enhances marketing effectiveness and expands market reach (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Furthermore, improvements in branding indicate that participants began to understand the importance of product differentiation in creating customer value. Strong branding plays a crucial role in building consumer trust and strengthening competitive advantage in the market (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

From a business perspective, the enhancement of marketing capability provides greater opportunities for MSMEs to improve performance, particularly in terms of sales growth and market expansion. Marketing capability has been widely recognized as a key driver of business performance and competitive advantage (Morgan et al., 2009). Therefore, digital-based mentoring not only improves technical marketing skills but also supports a broader transformation of MSME marketing strategies toward more adaptive and sustainable practice:

CONCLUSION

The community service program through digital-based mentoring has proven to be effective in enhancing the marketing capability of MSMEs in the processed food sector. This improvement is reflected in the shift from conventional marketing practices to more structured and digital-based approaches, as well as the increased ability of participants to manage social media, develop marketing content, and strengthen product branding. Beyond technical skills, the program also contributed to a shift in the mindset of MSME actors, encouraging them to view marketing as a strategic function in business development. This transformation has positive implications for expanding market reach and improving business performance.

Therefore, digital-based mentoring can be considered an effective and practical approach to support the transformation of MSME marketing strategies toward more adaptive, competitive, and sustainable business models.

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