

Smart Marketing for Small Businesses: Digital Strategy Training for Home-Based Entrepreneurs in Bengkle, Semarang District

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Abstract:

This community service program aimed to empower home-based entrepreneurs in Bengkle, Semarang District, by enhancing their digital marketing skills through targeted training. The primary objective was to equip participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively utilize digital platforms, particularly Google My Business, to expand their market reach. The program employed a participatory approach, involving initial assessments, interactive workshops, hands-on training sessions, peer reviews, and ongoing mentorship. Results indicated a significant improvement in participants' digital literacy and their ability to implement digital marketing strategies, leading to increased business visibility and customer engagement. These findings underscore the importance of tailored digital marketing education in empowering small-scale entrepreneurs in rural areas.

Keywords: digital marketing, home-based entrepreneurs, Google My Business, community empowerment, rural SMEs

Introduction

Contains a Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in economic development, particularly in rural areas where employment opportunities are often limited. Home-based businesses, as part of the SME sector, have become a vital source of income for many families, particularly women entrepreneurs who seek financial independence. In Bengkle, a hamlet in Gebugan Village, Bergas District, Semarang Regency, home-based industries have developed significantly over the years. These businesses, ranging from traditional food production such as peyek (crispy peanut crackers) and herbal drinks to mushroom cultivation, provide economic opportunities for the local community. However, despite their potential, these businesses struggle to expand their market reach due to their reliance on conventional sales methods. The lack of digital marketing adoption prevents them from gaining broader market access, limiting their business growth and sustainability (Sheth, J. N., & Parvatiyar, A., 2021; Wang, F, 2020). Figure 1 shows one of the housing goods in Bengkle hamlet.



Picture 1: Peanut Peyek, a home product of Bengkle Hamlet.

The digital revolution has transformed the global business landscape, making digital marketing an essential tool for business expansion (Omol, E.J, 2024) . Digital marketing strategies, particularly through platforms such as Google My Business (GMB), enable small businesses to reach a wider audience at minimal cost. GMB provides business owners with an opportunity to list their enterprises online, display relevant information, and increase their visibility through search engine optimization (SEO). Despite its effectiveness, many home-based entrepreneurs in Bengkle are unfamiliar with digital marketing tools. Most rely on word-of-mouth, local markets, and small-scale offline sales, which significantly limit their potential customer base. This gap in digital literacy prevents them from leveraging modern marketing techniques to enhance business performance.

Several studies highlight the benefits of digital marketing for SMEs, especially in rural areas where access to physical markets may be limited. Digital marketing enhances business visibility, strengthens customer engagement, and increases sales volume. According to Husain et al. (2022), Google My Business has proven to be an effective platform for micro and small enterprises to improve their digital presence. Similarly, research by Sifwah et al. (2024) emphasizes that digital marketing strategies significantly enhance business competitiveness by allowing small businesses to compete in larger markets. Given these advantages, it is crucial to introduce digital marketing education and training to home-based entrepreneurs in Bengkle to bridge the digital gap and empower them with essential marketing skills.

This community service program was designed to address the challenges faced by home-based entrepreneurs in Bengkle by providing training on digital marketing strategies. The primary objective is to equip participants with the necessary skills to utilize digital tools, particularly Google My Business, for business promotion. The training sessions included theoretical discussions on digital marketing concepts, practical demonstrations on setting up GMB profiles, and hands-on exercises to optimize business listings. By the end of the program, participants were expected to understand how to enhance their online visibility, attract more customers, and sustain business growth through digital marketing techniques. Additionally, ongoing

mentorship and evaluation were provided to ensure participants could effectively implement their newly acquired knowledge.

This initiative aligns with the broader goal of fostering digital inclusion among small entrepreneurs, enabling them to compete in an increasingly digitalized economy. By incorporating digital marketing into their business strategies, home-based entrepreneurs in Bengkle can expand their market reach beyond local boundaries, increase their revenue, and contribute to the economic development of their community. This paper discusses the implementation of the training program, the challenges encountered, and the impact on participants' businesses. Through this initiative, we aim to demonstrate how community-based digital marketing education can serve as a catalyst for economic empowerment and sustainable business growth.

Method

The community service program titled "Smart Marketing for Small Businesses: Digital Strategy Training for Home-Based Entrepreneurs in Bengkle, Semarang" was meticulously planned and executed to empower local entrepreneurs with digital marketing skills. This section details the planning process, the subjects involved, the location of the service, the involvement of the community in planning and organizing, the methods employed to achieve the objectives, and the stages of the community service activities.

The primary subjects of this service were home-based entrepreneurs residing in Dusun Bengkle, Gebugan Village, Bergas District, Semarang Regency. This area was selected due to its significant number of small-scale home industries, including traditional food production and handicrafts. Despite the potential of these businesses, many entrepreneurs lacked knowledge and skills in digital marketing, limiting their market reach. The community service activities were conducted at the Bengkle Village Hall, a central and accessible location for participants.

Community involvement was integral to the planning and organizing process. Initial meetings were held with local leaders, including the village head and community elders, to discuss the program's objectives and gather insights into the specific needs of the entrepreneurs. Subsequently, focus group discussions were conducted with selected home-based entrepreneurs to identify their challenges and expectations regarding digital marketing. This participatory approach ensured that the program was tailored to the community's needs and fostered a sense of ownership among participants.

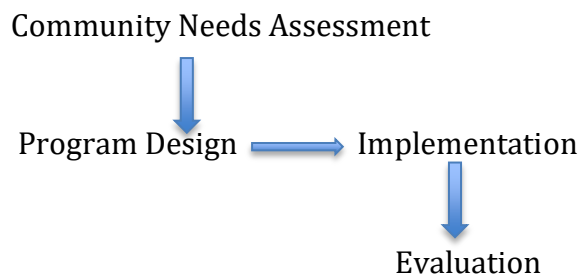
A mixed-methods approach was employed to achieve the program's objectives. Initially, a needs assessment survey was conducted to evaluate the participants' current knowledge of digital marketing and identify specific areas for improvement. Based on the survey results, a curriculum was developed focusing on practical digital marketing strategies, with an emphasis on utilizing Google My Business (GMB) as a tool

for enhancing online presence. The training sessions combined theoretical instruction with hands-on workshops, allowing participants to apply the concepts learned in real-time. Additionally, pre- and post-training evaluations were administered to assess the effectiveness of the program.

The community service activities were implemented in several stages, as illustrated in the flowchart below:

1. Preparation Stage: This initial phase involved conducting the needs assessment survey, developing the training curriculum, and coordinating with local leaders to schedule the training sessions.
2. Socialization Stage: In this phase, the program was introduced to the broader community through meetings and distribution of informational materials. Participants were recruited, and the objectives and benefits of the program were communicated to encourage active participation.
3. Training Stage: The core of the program, this stage consisted of a series of training sessions covering topics such as the importance of digital marketing, setting up and optimizing a GMB profile, and strategies for engaging customers online. Participants engaged in practical exercises to reinforce their learning.
4. Mentoring Stage: Following the training sessions, participants received ongoing support through mentoring. This included assistance with troubleshooting issues, providing feedback on their digital marketing efforts, and offering guidance on advanced topics as needed.
5. Evaluation Stage: The final phase involved assessing the impact of the program through post-training evaluations, participant feedback, and analysis of any changes in the participants' business performance. The findings were used to identify areas for improvement in future programs.

The planning process is depicted in the following flowchart



Result

The community service initiative titled "Smart Marketing for Small Businesses: Digital Strategy Training for Home-Based Entrepreneurs in Bengkle, Semarang" was designed to empower local entrepreneurs with digital marketing skills, particularly through the utilization of Google My Business (GMB). The program encompassed a series of activities aimed at addressing the challenges faced by these entrepreneurs and enhancing their knowledge and application of digital marketing strategies.

The mentoring process was structured into several key activities to ensure comprehensive support for the participants:

1. **Initial Assessment and Group Formation:** The program commenced with an assessment of the participants' existing knowledge of digital marketing. Based on this assessment, participants were grouped to facilitate peer learning and targeted mentoring.
2. **Interactive Workshops:** A series of workshops were conducted, focusing on the fundamentals of digital marketing and the specific functionalities of GMB. These sessions combined theoretical knowledge with practical applications, allowing participants to create and optimize their GMB profiles.
3. **Hands-On Training Sessions:** Participants engaged in practical sessions where they applied the concepts learned by setting up their GMB accounts, adding business information, and uploading images. Mentors provided real-time assistance during these activities.
4. **Peer Review and Feedback:** To foster collaborative learning, participants reviewed each other's GMB profiles and provided constructive feedback. This peer review process encouraged knowledge sharing and highlighted best practices.
5. **Ongoing Support and Troubleshooting:** Post-training, mentors remained accessible to address any challenges participants encountered while managing their GMB profiles. This support ensured sustained engagement and application of the skills learned.
6. **The program concluded with an evaluation session** where participants reflected on their learning experiences, discussed the impact on their businesses, and provided feedback for future improvements.

The program led to significant knowledge gains among the participants:

1. **Enhanced Digital Literacy:** Participants developed a solid understanding of digital marketing principles and the practical skills to manage their online presence through GMB.
2. **Increased Confidence:** The hands-on training and ongoing support boosted participants' confidence in utilizing digital tools to promote their businesses.
3. **Community Collaboration:** The peer review sessions fostered a sense of community, encouraging entrepreneurs to support each other in their digital marketing endeavors.
4. **Sustainable Practices:** Participants expressed a commitment to maintaining and updating their GMB profiles, recognizing the long-term benefits of an active online presence.

To measure the knowledge gained, assessments were carried out before and

after training, resulting in Table 1.

Table 1. Quantity knowledge gained before and after training

Item	Knowledge Score Befor Training	Knowledge Score After Training	percentage increase (%)
Understanding of Digital Marketing	2.5	4.5	80
Proficiency in Using GMB	1.8	3.2	78
Confidence in Online Engagement	2.0	3.3	65
Awareness of Digital Tools	2.3	4.3	87

Source : Primary data is processed

Discussion

The community service program titled "Smart Marketing for Small Businesses: Digital Strategy Training for Home-Based Entrepreneurs in Bengkle, Semarang" aimed to empower local entrepreneurs by enhancing their digital marketing capabilities, particularly through the utilization of Google My Business (GMB). The outcomes of this initiative revealed significant improvements in participants' digital literacy and their application of marketing strategies, aligning with existing literature that underscores the importance of digitalization for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in rural settings.

Prior to the intervention, many home-based entrepreneurs in Bengkle relied heavily on traditional marketing methods, which limited their market reach. The training provided them with a comprehensive understanding of the importance of an online presence and equipped them with practical skills to leverage digital platforms for business promotion. This finding is consistent with the work of Gupta (2020), who emphasized that digital marketing enhances SME competitiveness by expanding market reach and fostering customer engagement.

Post-training, participants effectively utilized GMB to enhance their business visibility. By optimizing their GMB profiles, they improved their rankings in local search results, thereby attracting more local customers. This outcome aligns with the insights provided by NeedMomentum (2024), which highlighted that well-optimized GMB profiles lead to higher rankings and increased local customer attraction. Additionally, maintaining an updated GMB profile helps build trust and credibility among consumers, further supporting business growth. Figure 2 depicts the PkM Team, along with students and home business actors, following the training session.



Figure 2: PkM Team, Students, and Home Business Actors in Bengkle hamlet.

The program underscores the significance of a participatory approach in community empowerment. Active involvement of participants in the training process and the provision of continuous support fostered a collaborative learning environment. This approach resonates with the empowerment framework proposed by Fahrudin & Artyasa (2011), which emphasizes active community participation in capacity-building processes. Moreover, the initiative highlights the critical role of digital technology in sustaining small businesses in the modern era, echoing Wardhana's (2015) assertion that digital marketing strategies significantly impact the competitive advantage of SMEs in Indonesia.

Despite the program's success, several challenges emerged. Limited internet access in certain areas of Bengkle hindered participants from fully managing their GMB profiles. Furthermore, varying levels of digital literacy among participants necessitated adaptive training approaches to ensure inclusivity. These challenges suggest the need for comprehensive strategies to support SME digitalization in rural areas, including infrastructure development and ongoing training programs.

Conclusion

The community service program titled "Smart Marketing for Small Businesses: Digital Strategy Training for Home-Based Entrepreneurs in Bengkle, Semarang" has demonstrated the transformative potential of targeted digital marketing education for small-scale entrepreneurs. The initiative not only enhanced participants' digital literacy but also empowered them to effectively utilize tools like Google My Business to expand their market reach.

This program underscores the critical role of experiential learning in adult education. By engaging participants in hands-on activities, the training facilitated active learning, allowing entrepreneurs to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. Furthermore, the incorporation of reflection sessions enabled participants to critically assess their learning processes, leading to deeper understanding and personal growth. The program also illustrates the importance of community-centric

approaches in service delivery. By involving local entrepreneurs in the planning and implementation phases, the initiative fostered a sense of ownership and relevance among participants.

Building on the successes and insights gained from this program, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Sustained Engagement:** To ensure long-term impact, it is essential to establish ongoing support mechanisms for participants. This could include regular follow-up sessions, advanced training modules, and the creation of peer support networks to facilitate continuous learning and problem-solving.
2. **Scalability:** Given the positive outcomes observed, scaling the program to include more participants across different regions could amplify its benefits. Tailoring the content to address specific local needs and diversifying the industries represented would enhance the program's applicability and reach.
3. **Integration of Advanced Digital Tools:** Introducing participants to a broader array of digital marketing tools and platforms can further enhance their marketing strategies. Workshops on social media marketing, search engine optimization, and e-commerce platforms could provide additional avenues for business growth.
4. **Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms:** Implementing robust evaluation frameworks to assess the program's effectiveness and gather participant feedback is crucial. This data can inform iterative improvements, ensuring the program remains responsive to participant needs and emerging digital marketing trends.

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