

Empowering MSMEs in the Digital Era: E-Commerce Training and Technology-Based Promotional Design

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Abstract: *Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are essential for economic growth but often struggle with digital adaptation. This community program enhances MSME competitiveness by providing e-commerce training and technology-driven promotional design. Participants learn to utilize online marketplaces, optimize social media, and create compelling marketing materials. The program employs hands-on workshops, interactive demonstrations, and personalized mentoring. Results show improved skills in managing digital platforms, designing effective promotions, and implementing marketing strategies. By adopting digital tools, MSMEs expand market reach, increase revenue, and strengthen sustainability. This initiative provides a replicable model for fostering digital transformation among small businesses, enabling them to remain competitive in the evolving digital landscape.*

Keywords: *MSMEs, Digital Transformation, E-Commerce, Marketing Innovation, Business Growth*

Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in economic development, contributing to job creation and poverty reduction. However, many MSMEs still struggle to adapt to technological advancements, particularly in digital marketing and e-commerce platforms. The increasing reliance on online business models highlights the need for MSMEs to enhance their digital capabilities, especially in promotional strategies and online sales optimization (Yudilestari et al., 2024)

The rapid growth of e-commerce presents both opportunities and challenges for MSMEs. While digital platforms enable wider market access, many small business owners lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize digital marketing tools and promotional design strategies (Sugianto & Utama, 2021). Without adequate digital literacy, MSMEs risk being left behind in an increasingly competitive market.

This community service initiative, conducted by KKN UPRIS students and field supervisors (DPL) in Sambirejo, Gayamsari District, Semarang, aims to empower MSMEs by providing comprehensive e-commerce training and technology-based promotional design workshops. The program focuses on equipping MSME owners with practical skills in utilizing e-commerce platforms, social media marketing, and graphic design tools to enhance their brand visibility and sales performance.

Existing studies emphasize the importance of digital literacy and online branding in improving MSME sustainability. Training programs that focus on optimizing digital marketing strategies have shown positive impacts on sales performance and brand recognition (Supriyanti et al., 2024; Yulita et al., 2023). Moreover, studies on the use of Canva and other design tools indicate that visually appealing promotional materials significantly influence consumer engagement and purchasing decisions (Febriani & Sabna, 2024).

This initiative adopts a participatory and hands-on approach, combining theoretical sessions with practical applications. Participants will be guided through the creation of promotional materials, social media marketing strategies, and the utilization of e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and social media marketplaces (Buwarda, 2022; Sugianto & Utama, 2021). By the end of the program, MSME owners are expected to have a better understanding of digital business strategies, enabling them to compete more effectively in the digital era.

With the increasing adoption of digital technology, MSMEs must be well-prepared to leverage these tools for business growth. This community service project not only addresses the digital skill gap among local entrepreneurs but also fosters economic resilience through sustainable digital transformation.

Method

The methodology used in this community service program consists of several stages, including socialization, training, mentoring, and evaluation. The activities were conducted by providing training on WhatsApp Business usage and fundamental product design knowledge to optimize product marketing and branding for MSMEs. This process was designed to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding so they could directly apply the acquired knowledge to their businesses (Alamsari Andayani et al., 2023).



Image 1 Practicing WhatsApp Business Implementation



Image 2 Socialization of Product Design

Stages of the Community Service Method

The implementation stages of this program consist of four main parts:

1. Socialization and Preparation

The activity began with socialization sessions for MSME participants in Kelurahan Sambirejo, Kecamatan Gayamsari, Semarang, introducing them to the importance of WhatsApp Business and product design in enhancing business competitiveness. An initial survey was conducted to assess participants' understanding of digital marketing technology and to identify challenges they faced in product marketing and branding (Nasution et al., 2024).

2. WhatsApp Business and Product Design Training

The training consisted of two main sessions. The first session focused on teaching participants how to use WhatsApp Business to improve customer engagement, including setting up catalogs, automated messages, and implementing effective marketing strategies. The second session covered the basics of product design and branding, including logo creation, color selection, and using design applications such as Canva to create attractive packaging and promotional materials (Yulita et al., 2023).

3. Mentoring and Implementation

After the training, participants received mentoring to help them apply the knowledge they had learned. The mentoring process was conducted both in-person and through WhatsApp groups, where MSME owners could ask questions and discuss the implementation of WhatsApp Business and product design strategies. Those facing difficulties received personalized guidance to ensure they could effectively adopt the digital tools (Buwarda, 2022).

4. Evaluation and Monitoring

The evaluation process involved comparing participants' understanding before and after the training through pre-tests and post-tests. Additionally, monitoring

the improvement in customer engagement and sales through WhatsApp Business, as well as enhancements in product design, was carried out. Data was collected through interviews and digital performance analysis from the participating MSMEs (Kusumawati, 2022).

Table 1
Stages of the Community Service Method

No	Stage	Activities Conducted
1	Socialization and Preparation	Initial survey, introduction to WhatsApp Business and product design, identification of MSME challenges.
2	WhatsApp Business and Product Design Training	Learning WhatsApp Business features (catalogs, automated messaging, marketing strategies), fundamentals of product design using Canva.
3	Mentoring and Implementation	Personal and group mentoring, online discussions, assistance in applying WhatsApp Business and product design strategies.
4	Evaluation and Monitoring	Analysis of WhatsApp Business engagement, participant interviews, evaluation of product design improvements.

Result

The training program effectively addressed the digitalization challenges faced by MSMEs in Kelurahan Sambirejo. Many MSMEs initially lacked awareness of digital tools and depended on conventional marketing strategies, such as word-of-mouth promotion and direct selling. The introduction of WhatsApp Business as a marketing and customer engagement tool helped optimize communication, streamline transactions, and improve customer interaction.

Additionally, the product design and branding segment of the training provided essential skills for visual marketing, which was crucial for improving market competitiveness. By learning to use simple graphic design tools, MSMEs were able to create more professional-looking promotional materials, enhancing their brand identity and consumer appeal.

The hands-on training approach proved to be highly effective, as participants actively engaged in real-time exercises and received direct feedback from trainers. This practical approach enabled them to apply new knowledge immediately to their businesses, ensuring a smooth transition from traditional to digital marketing methods.

Moreover, continuous mentoring and follow-up support allowed participants to seek guidance and troubleshoot challenges in real-world applications. The WhatsApp group discussions further facilitated knowledge-sharing and peer learning, ensuring

that MSMEs continued to develop their skills beyond the training sessions.

Moving forward, further initiatives should focus on expanding digital literacy through advanced marketing techniques, such as social media advertising, data-driven marketing, and business automation strategies. This would further enhance MSMEs' ability to compete in the growing digital economy and increase their market reach.

Discussion

The training program effectively addressed the digitalization challenges faced by MSMEs in Kelurahan Sambirejo, Semarang. Many MSMEs initially lacked awareness of digital tools and depended on conventional marketing strategies, such as word-of-mouth promotion and direct selling. The introduction of WhatsApp Business as a marketing and customer engagement tool helped optimize communication, streamline transactions, and improve customer interaction.

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Conclusion (Cambria, size 13)

This community service program successfully enhanced the digital marketing capabilities of MSMEs in Kelurahan Sambirejo by providing them with practical training on WhatsApp Business and product branding strategies.

Key Takeaways:

1. Improved ability to utilize WhatsApp Business for customer engagement, sales management, and automated communication.
2. Enhanced product branding and marketing skills, enabling MSMEs to create professional promotional materials and digital catalogs.
3. Greater confidence and readiness to integrate digital marketing tools, fostering a more competitive and resilient MSME sector.

The findings of this program highlight the importance of digital transformation for MSMEs in adapting to modern business trends. Future initiatives should focus on advanced digital marketing, financial literacy, and social media optimization to support long-term business sustainability and expansion.

Acknowledgements (Cambria, size 13)

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This initiative was a collaborative effort to promote MSME digitalization and economic empowerment, and we hope that the skills and knowledge shared will continue to benefit participants in growing their businesses sustainably.

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