



PRACTICE-BASED ARTICLE



Empowering MSMEs through technical assistance for entrepreneurship in the digital age

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ABSTRACT

This community service initiative aims to support the adaptation of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to digital marketing strategies, particularly within Thailand's dynamic MSME sector. Recognizing the challenges and opportunities brought by digital transformation, this program addresses the lack of digital literacy, limited resources, and insufficient marketing skills that hinder MSMEs from fully utilizing digital platforms for growth. The project includes training sessions focused on digital marketing and technical skills, equipping MSMEs with practical knowledge to create and optimize social media and Google Business accounts and strategies to expand their market reach. Additionally, barista training on coffee brewing techniques is provided to enhance product quality and customer engagement for coffee-related MSMEs. This dual approach integrates technical product skills with essential digital marketing strategies, empowering MSMEs to meet modern market demands and drive sustainable economic development. The outcomes of this initiative align with the community service mission in higher education (*Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi*) by offering practical solutions and fostering international collaboration. The project demonstrates significant improvements in MSMEs' digital presence, product appeal, and customer engagement, enhancing their competitiveness in the digital economy.

KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurship; MSMEs; technical assistance; digital age

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1. Introduction

In the digital era, promotional development as part of the marketing mix strategy has become crucial in business and entrepreneurial growth (Imaniar & Wahyudiono, 2018).

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The advancement of information technology has created both opportunities and challenges for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) worldwide, including in Thailand. Digital transformation is essential for MSMEs to remain competitive and improve their performance in an increasingly challenging market. Digital marketing is a strategic choice, particularly for MSMEs with limited promotional budgets (Manalu et al, 2019). Utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and websites has proven to be an effective alternative for building brand awareness, customer engagement, sales, and customer loyalty. Digital marketing strategies contribute 78% to the competitive advantage of MSMEs in product marketing, while the remaining 22% is influenced by other factors not analyzed in this study, such as capital capability, resource availability, and managerial expertise (Wardhana, 2015). However, many MSMEs struggle to understand and leverage digital technology due to a lack of technical knowledge and adequate support (Purwana et al., 2017).

In Thailand, MSMEs play a vital role in supporting local and national economies, providing employment opportunities, and serving as a primary source of income for many communities. To strengthen their position, technical assistance is needed to help them utilize digital technology to enhance productivity, expand market access, and improve competitiveness at both local and international levels. Despite the vast potential of the digital era, many MSMEs in Thailand still face challenges in adapting to this transformation, including limited digital skills, a lack of knowledge about e-commerce and digital marketing, and outdated financial management practices. This community service initiative aims to bridge these gaps by providing practical training and guidance that MSMEs can immediately apply. This initiative aligns with the community service mission of higher education (*Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi*) (Mahiri & Kurnadi, 2025). Providing entrepreneurship training for MSMEs at Thailand's MSME centers is expected to enhance academics' capabilities in applying digital-based entrepreneurship knowledge while fostering ongoing research on the effectiveness of digital transformation for MSMEs. Furthermore, this initiative supports international collaboration with neighboring countries, strengthening relationships through knowledge sharing, skill development, and resource exchange.

With this background in mind, this community engagement program is expected to serve as a concrete solution for enhancing MSME competencies in the digital era while providing real contributions from the academic world to society, particularly in improving MSMEs' competitiveness and economic independence in Thailand.

Additionally, the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Islam Kebangsaan Indonesia (UNIKI) is currently undertaking an international community service initiative and has chosen Thailand as the location for this project. This decision was made because MSMEs in Thailand also play a crucial role in the country's economic development. The

primary objective of this program is to provide barista training in coffee brewing techniques to enhance the unique flavors of their coffee products. The research locations include several of Thailand's MSME centers and souvenir centers.

2. Research methods

This community service program was conducted at Kaysorn Souvenir Shop, Hatyai, Thailand. The initiative was carried out by lecturers from Universitas Islam Kebangsaan Indonesia (UNIKI), with participants including baristas from Kaysorn, store attendants from the souvenir shopping center, and several MSMEs around Hatyai, Thailand.

The program was implemented through training sessions utilizing two main methods:

1. Lecture on the importance of digital marketing

The lecture method was used to explain the significance of digital marketing for the growth of MSMEs, particularly in enhancing promotional activities. This session included real-life examples of MSMEs that successfully leveraged digital platforms to promote their businesses (Yosepha, 2021). Through this session, participants were expected to recognize the importance of digital marketing in today's business landscape.

2. Hands-on practice and digital account setup tutorial

The training continued with a hands-on practice session, where participants were guided in creating accounts on digital platforms, specifically Google Business, and business accounts on social media platforms like Instagram. The tutorial explained how to optimize various features available on these platforms to support their marketing strategies.

Additionally, the training featured a special session on coffee brewing techniques designed to attract customers. Coffee-related MSMEs were trained in selecting high-quality coffee beans and brewing techniques that produce optimal flavors (Mutia et al., 2022). This session was combined with coffee marketing strategies, including how to create engaging content showcasing the brewing process and the uniqueness of their coffee products on digital platforms. The implementation steps are below:

1. Coordination with partners

The initial step involved coordinating with partners to arrange the schedule, select the location and determine the participants for the training. During this preliminary meeting, the goal was to finalize the most suitable venue, date, and time to ensure effective material delivery. MSME representatives also designated the most

appropriate employees to participate, including sales personnel, marketing staff representatives, and MSME owners.

2. Preparation for training and counseling

This stage included preparing lecture materials, arranging speakers, and compiling printed materials for distribution to participants. Additionally, logistical preparations were made, such as checking and setting up the venue, preparing attendance lists, refreshments, and event backdrops.

3. Lecture session implementation

The first session consisted of a lecture on the importance of digital marketing, delivered by one of the team members. This session lasted approximately 30 minutes and was followed by a Q&A segment.

4. Hands-on practice and tutorial session

The second session involved a practical tutorial on effectively creating and managing accounts on Google Business and Instagram. This session lasted approximately 60 minutes and was led by the proposing team members.

5. Activity report compilation

The final step was preparing a comprehensive activity report covering all aspects of the training program.

3. Results

This community service activity was conducted on October 17, 2024. The results achieved through this program included coordination with MSMEs, followed by a joint visit to the location with the community service team. The participants, particularly the baristas and storekeepers in the souvenir and accessories center, enthusiastically welcomed the initiative ([Figure 1](#)).

The team then provided a socialization session on the importance of digitalization for MSMEs in the current digital era. The solutions offered through this community service activity are as follows:

1. Training on utilizing digital marketing for product promotion

The training focused on using digital marketing to promote MSME products, accompanied by examples of successful MSMEs that have effectively leveraged digital marketing. This training aimed to address MSMEs' challenges, particularly in enhancing their understanding, skills, and knowledge of digital marketing to maximize product promotion (Supriyanto, [2022](#)) and boost MSME productivity (Dwijayanti et al., [2020](#)).

2. Tutorial on creating and optimizing digital media accounts

Participants received tutorials and hands-on practice creating accounts on digital platforms such as Google Business and social media like Instagram (Susanti, 2018). MSME owners were trained to set up and optimize their accounts on these platforms to expand market reach and enhance promotional efforts. The community service team also provided sample Google Business and Instagram accounts as references that MSMEs could further develop.



Figure 1. The community service team

3. Training on coffee brewing techniques

The Faculty of Economics and Business at UNIKI community service team collaborated with lecturers from the State Islamic University of North Sumatra to conduct coffee brewing training for baristas in the local souvenir and snack center. This initiative was undertaken because coffee is an internationally recognized beverage consumed across all social classes. Therefore, in addition to digital training, MSMEs were also given specialized training in coffee brewing techniques, including selecting high-quality coffee beans, brewing methods, and presentation styles (Figure 2).

By acquiring these skills, MSMEs are expected to enhance their product appeal through superior coffee taste and quality, which can be effectively promoted on digital platforms to attract more consumers. However, the key to serving high-quality coffee lies in selecting the best coffee beans, as the marketing of coffee products has its dynamics (Rosiana, 2020). The quality of the coffee beans influences the taste of brewed coffee (Juliadi et al., 2021; Mutia et al., 2022).

Large cafes and restaurants are willing to pay premium wages for skilled baristas who can craft unique and high-quality coffee. The creative industry related to coffee processing has also seen significant growth in recent years (Handini, 2020).



Figure 2. Coffee brewing training for baristas

4. Discussion

The implementation of digital marketing as an MSME marketing strategy in today's era significantly impacts the success and growth of MSMEs (Jannatin et al., 2020). In addition to benefiting regions with ecotourism, the presence of MSMEs can have a considerable influence (Suryana & Burhanuddin, 2021), as visitors to a particular area often seek unique local MSME products as souvenirs (Firdaus & Tutri, 2018). The relationship between MSMEs and tourism appeal is undeniable (Aswadi et al., 2018; Aswadi et al., 2019; Hasan et al., 2023; Fathoni, 2020; Mutia et al., 2018), forming an inseparable

combination (Khalida & Fauji, 2020). Additionally, the role of government cannot be overlooked in developing MSMEs, as government regulations play a crucial role in accelerating MSME growth in a region (Fauziyah & Mahara, 2022).

Similar to the community service program conducted by our team, visiting a new region naturally leads people to seek references for unique local delicacies, which MSMEs often provide in the form of snacks, accessories, and other specialty products (Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2020). However, in today's digital era, utilizing social media and digital advancements for MSME promotion is essential to increase their visibility and ensure that potential customers know their presence (Niem et al., 2021).

5. Conclusion

A strong understanding of digitalization is crucial for MSMEs in today's digital era, as it opens opportunities for accessing broader markets, increasing product visibility, and competing more effectively. By leveraging digital technologies such as social media, e-commerce, and other digital marketing platforms, MSMEs can optimize promotional strategies, improve customer interactions, and enhance sales and customer loyalty. Digitalization also enables MSMEs to operate more efficiently in business management and financial record-keeping, significantly boosting their competitiveness in the increasingly tight global market. With a solid grasp of digitalization, MSMEs can better navigate modern challenges and seize new opportunities for sustainable growth.

Furthermore, business risks that may arise at any time in managing MSMEs must be carefully considered, making risk management an essential aspect of business operations. MSME entrepreneurs must be aware of and understand the risks most likely to occur. Risk management is not solely the responsibility of MSMEs but also involves corporations (such as banks and insurance companies), the government, and other relevant institutions (Cahyati et al., 2022). One of the key business risks MSMEs face is the impact of natural disasters, which can be mitigated through insurance companies to cover potential financial losses caused by such events.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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