

Strengthening Creative Entrepreneurship through Digital Marketing Education in Kwangsan Village, Sidoarjo

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ABSTRACT

This community service activity aims to strengthen the creative entrepreneurship of the people of Kwangsan Village, Sidoarjo Regency through digital marketing education. This activity was motivated by the suboptimal use of digital media by village communities in marketing creative business products, even though the potential for local resources and financial capital was relatively adequate. The method used is a descriptive-participatory approach through *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) by involving the people of Kwangsan Village from the stage of needs assessment, planning, implementation, to evaluation. Education is focused on the use of social media, marketplaces, and digital content strategies as a means of marketing creative businesses. The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' knowledge and skills in digital marketing, which had an impact on increasing the readiness of the community in developing creative businesses based on local potential in Kwangsan Village. This activity contributes to strengthening the local entrepreneurial ecosystem and has the potential to become a model for sustainable village community empowerment in Sidoarjo Regency.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have a strategic role in the Indonesian economy, both as contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and as job providers. Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises shows that MSMEs contribute more than 60% to the national GDP and absorb around 97% of the workforce in Indonesia (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2020). This role places MSMEs as the backbone of the national economy as well as an important instrument in poverty alleviation and improving community welfare at the local level (Tambunan, 2019).

Sidoarjo Regency is one of the areas with fairly high economic dynamics in East Java Province, supported by the industrial, trade, service, and household business sectors. At the village level, including Kwangsan Village, there is potential for creative businesses based on local resources that can be developed by the community. However, this potential has not been fully optimized into competitive productive

business activities, especially due to the limited marketing capabilities and use of digital technology by village business actors (Setiawan et al., 2022).

From an entrepreneurial perspective, creativity and innovation are key factors in creating product added value and increasing business competitiveness. Creativity is not only related to product ideas, but also includes how to market and communicate products to consumers effectively (Drucker, 2014). Previous studies have confirmed that product innovation and adaptive marketing strategies play an important role in the sustainability of creative ventures, especially on a micro and small scale (Leiwakabessy et al., 2023).

The development of digital technology and changes in consumer behavior have driven the transformation of business marketing patterns. Digital marketing through social media and marketplaces allows MSME actors to expand market reach, reduce promotional costs, and build direct interaction with consumers (Taiminen & Karjaluo, 2015; Kotler et al., 2021). However, the limitations of digital literacy and marketing skills are still the main obstacles for rural communities in developing creative businesses based on digital technology (OECD, 2020).

This condition is also found in the people of Kwangsan Village, Sidoarjo Regency, where some creative business actors still rely on conventional marketing and have not utilized digital media optimally. Therefore, community service activities that focus on digital marketing education are relevant as a strategy to strengthen creative entrepreneurship at the village level. Universities play a strategic role as a strategic partner in transferring practical knowledge and skills through participatory and contextual community empowerment approaches (Ife, 2016).

The educational material in this activity is focused on digital marketing, including the introduction of social media as a means of promoting creative businesses, creating visual content and product narratives, the use of marketplaces, and digital communication strategies that are in accordance with the characteristics of the local market in Kwangsan Village. This approach is designed to encourage village communities to be able to manage and market creative business products more effectively and sustainably.

This approach to service activities uses Participatory Action Research (PAR), which places the community as an active subject in the process of problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities. This participatory approach is in line with the concept of empowering rural communities in the development of local entrepreneurship, as it allows for a collaborative learning process and community capacity building in a sustainable manner (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014; Ife, 2016).

Strengthening community-based entrepreneurship is also a concern in various institutional policies and studies in Indonesia. A study by Ilham and Zakariya (2021) shows that the implementation of entrepreneurship programs initiated by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, especially in community-based institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, plays an important role in encouraging economic independence and strengthening community capacity. The findings confirm that the success of entrepreneurship programs is greatly influenced by contextual, participatory approaches, and the suitability of programs with the socio-economic characteristics of the target community.

In addition to technical and policy aspects, the value dimension and entrepreneurial leadership also have a strategic role in the sustainability of micro and creative businesses. Research by Ilham et al. (2022) emphasizes that strong entrepreneurial leadership is able to encourage community economic independence through adaptive and value-based business management. Meanwhile, Awaliyah and Zakariya (2023) emphasized that the application of Islamic business ethics in MSME practices in the digital era contributes to increasing consumer trust and business sustainability. These findings reinforce the urgency of strengthening creative entrepreneurship that is not only oriented to the technical aspects of digital marketing, but also to the values, leadership, and social responsibility of businesses.

Various programs to strengthen entrepreneurship and digital marketing training for MSMEs have been carried out in various regions of Indonesia. However, most of these programs are still instructive and top-down, so the involvement of the community as an active subject in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating the program is still limited. As a result, the impact of programs is often

unsustainable and less able to encourage profound changes in people's business behavior. Therefore, an empowerment approach is needed that places the community as the main actor in the process of strengthening entrepreneurship, especially at the village level (Ife, 2016).

The *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach is seen as relevant in the context of community service because it emphasizes the process of reflection, participation, and joint learning between facilitators and target communities. Through PAR, community service activities are not only oriented to knowledge transfer, but also to strengthening the capacity, critical awareness, and independence of the community in managing the local economic potential in a sustainable manner (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014). This approach is important in strengthening village-based creative entrepreneurship, especially in facing the challenges of digital economy transformation.

Based on these conditions, this service activity has novelty in the integration between digital marketing education, strengthening creative entrepreneurship, and a participatory approach based on PAR at the village level. Focusing on the people of Kwangsan Village as an active subject is expected to be able to produce a model for strengthening creative entrepreneurship that is contextual, applicative, and has the potential to be replicated in other villages with similar characteristics in Sidoarjo Regency.

2. METHODS

This community service activity is carried out using a descriptive-participatory approach with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, which places the community as an active subject in the entire series of service activities. The PAR approach was chosen because it allows for a joint learning process between the service team and the community in identifying problems, designing solutions, and reflecting on the results of activities in a sustainable manner (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

The subject of the activity is the people of Kwangsan Village, Sidoarjo Regency, especially micro business actors and people who have an interest in starting or developing creative businesses but have not been optimal in utilizing digital marketing. The selection of locations and subjects of activities is based on the potential of creative businesses based on local village resources and the limited literacy and digital marketing skills among the local community.

The initial stage of the activity began with a needs assessment carried out through field observation and initial discussions with the people of Kwangsan Village. This assessment aims to identify the characteristics of participants, the types of creative businesses carried out, the marketing patterns used, and the main obstacles in the use of digital media as a means of marketing. The results of the assessment are the basis for program planning, including the preparation of digital marketing education materials that are contextual and in accordance with the needs of the village community.

The implementation stage of activities is carried out in the form of socialization, training, and workshops that focus on digital marketing education to strengthen creative entrepreneurship. The material provided includes the introduction of social media as a means of promoting creative businesses, creating simple content based on visuals and product narratives, the use of marketplaces, and digital communication strategies that are in accordance with the characteristics of the local market in Kwangsan Village. The implementation process is supported by interactive discussions and hands-on practice so that participants are actively involved in each activity session.

The evaluation of activities was carried out through a pre-test and post-test approach to measure the increase in participants' knowledge and understanding related to digital marketing, as well as through observation of participants' participation and involvement during the activity. The final stage of the activity includes reflection and preparation of a report, which aims to assess the effectiveness of the program and formulate recommendations for the development of digital marketing-based community service activities in Kwangsan Village in the future. The instruments used in this activity include training modules, evaluation questionnaires, and observation sheets of the activity process.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of community service activities in the form of digital marketing education in the context of strengthening creative entrepreneurship in Kwangsan Village, Sidoarjo Regency went well and received a positive response from participants. Activities are carried out through several main stages, including socialization, training, workshops, and short assistance designed based on the results of community needs assessments.

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Profile of Activity Participants

Participants of community service activities in Kwangsan Village consist of micro business actors and communities who have an interest in developing creative businesses based on local potential. The types of businesses run by participants are dominated by home culinary businesses, processed food products, and small-scale creative businesses that utilize local village resources. Before the event took place, most of the participants still relied on conventional marketing through direct sales and limited social networks, without a planned digital marketing strategy.

From the results of the initial assessment, it is known that some participants already have supporting devices such as smartphones and internet access, but do not have an adequate understanding of the use of social media and marketplaces as a means of business marketing. This condition shows that the main obstacle faced is not the availability of technology, but in digital marketing literacy and skills.

3.1.2. Implementation of Activities

In the initial stage, the needs assessment through observation and initial discussion showed that most of the participants already had micro-businesses based on local potential, especially in the field of home culinary and small-scale creative businesses. However, the marketing pattern used is still conventional and has not made optimal use of digital media. Participants also showed limited knowledge in creating promotional content and utilizing the marketplace.

At the socialization stage, participants showed high enthusiasm for creative entrepreneurship and digital marketing materials. Participants gained an initial understanding of the importance of using digital technology in developing creative businesses, especially as a means to expand market reach and increase the competitiveness of local products. This increase in understanding can be seen from the participants' responses in the discussion and question and answer sessions that took place actively.

The training and workshop stages are focused on digital marketing practices, including the preparation of simple promotional content, the use of social media, and the introduction of marketplaces as a marketing channel for creative businesses. The results of the evaluation through pre-test and post-test showed an increase in participants' knowledge and skills in understanding digital marketing strategies. Most of the participants were able to identify the potential of creative businesses based on local resources in Kwangsan Village, such as home culinary products and small-scale creative businesses, and began to design a more structured digital marketing strategy.

The short mentoring provided a space for participants to discuss the obstacles faced in managing and marketing their business digitally. The main challenges identified include limited experience in managing business social media accounts, consistency in creating promotional content, and time management between business activities and digital marketing. Nonetheless, participants showed a commitment to implementing the knowledge gained during the activity.

The implementation of the activity is supported by visual documentation in the form of socialization photos, training, and group discussions. The existence of this documentation is empirical evidence of the active involvement of the Kwangsan Village community in every stage of the service program (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).



Figure 1: Documentation of Socialization Activities (Photos of material presentations and participants)



Figure 2: Workshop Documentation and Group Discussion

The existence of this visual documentation strengthens empirical evidence of the implementation of activities and shows the active participation of the community in each stage of the program.

3.1.3. Changes in Participants' Knowledge and Attitudes

The real output of this service activity is not only in the form of increasing participants' knowledge, but also in the form of the results of digital marketing practices. Some of the participants have been able to develop a simple promotional content concept based on product photos and short narratives, as well as design a plan to use social media as a means of business promotion. In addition, participants also gained an initial understanding of the use of the marketplace as an alternative distribution channel for creative business products.

The output shows that service activities do not stop at the conceptual level, but also produce practical achievements that can be directly applied by participants in daily business activities. This is in line with the goal of the PAR approach which emphasizes real action and reflection as part of the community empowerment process.

3.2. Discussion

The results of the activity show that digital marketing education has a positive impact on strengthening the creative entrepreneurship of the people of Kwangsan Village. Increasing digital marketing literacy encourages participants to better understand the importance of product identity, local uniqueness values, and communication strategies that are in accordance with the characteristics of digital consumers. This finding is in line with the research of Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) which emphasized that the use of digital marketing channels is able to increase the competitiveness of micro and small businesses through expanding market access and promotion cost efficiency.

The change in participants' business behavior can also be seen from the shift in marketing patterns that were originally passive and conventional to a more proactive and adaptive approach based on digital media. Digital marketing education not only functions as a technical means of promotion, but also as an entrepreneurial learning process that encourages creativity and business innovation. This

reinforces the view of Kotler et al. (2021) that digital marketing plays a strategic role in creating added value and building long-term relationships between business actors and consumers.

The findings in this activity reinforce the view that digital marketing literacy is an important prerequisite for strengthening creative entrepreneurship at the village level. The ability of business actors to manage digital content, build communication with consumers, and utilize digital platforms contributes to increasing business confidence and independence. This shows that digital marketing not only functions as a promotional tool, but also as a medium for economic empowerment of rural communities.

The PAR-based participatory approach used in this activity has been proven to be able to encourage participants' *sense of ownership* towards the service program. The active involvement of the community in every stage of the activity strengthens the collective learning process and increases the program's sustainability opportunities. These findings are in line with the principle of community empowerment which places participation as the key to the success and sustainability of local entrepreneurship development (Ife, 2016; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

In the context of village economic development, the results of this activity show that the integration between creative entrepreneurship and digital marketing can be an effective strategy to increase the competitiveness of micro enterprises based on local potential. With continuous mentoring and cross-sectoral support, this service model has the potential to be developed as part of a strategy to strengthen the village economy that is adaptive to the dynamics of the digital economy, as recommended by the OECD (2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Community service activities in the form of strengthening creative entrepreneurship through digital marketing education in Kwangsan Village, Sidoarjo Regency have proven effective in increasing community knowledge and skills in utilizing digital media as a means of developing creative businesses. The descriptive-participatory approach through *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) allows for active community involvement from the needs assessment stage to reflection, so that the program can be adjusted to the local conditions and potentials of the village.

Through a series of socialization, training, workshops, and short mentoring, participants showed an increased understanding of digital marketing strategies, the use of social media and marketplaces, as well as the ability to design creative business ideas that are more structured and adaptive to the needs of the local market. Digital marketing education plays a strategic role as a strategic instrument in strengthening the competitiveness of village-scale creative businesses, especially for the people of Kwangsan Village who have not previously optimally utilized digital technology.

Overall, this program contributes to strengthening the local entrepreneurial ecosystem based on village potential and community participation. For the sustainability of the program's impact, further assistance and collaboration between universities, village governments, and business communities are needed so that the strengthening of creative entrepreneurship based on digital marketing can support inclusive and sustainable village economic development in Sidoarjo Regency.

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