
Improving Digital Literacy of Rural Handicraft MSMEs to Strengthen the Promotion of Village Superior Products Based on Creative Economy

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Artikel Information	Abstract
<p>Keywords: Digital Literacy, Creative Economy, Handicraft MSMEs, Rural Development, Digital Marketing.</p>	<p>The development of the creative economy in rural areas plays a significant role in improving community welfare, particularly through handicraft micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). However, many rural handicraft MSMEs, especially those producing woven bamboo and rattan products, still face challenges in utilizing digital marketing strategies due to limited digital literacy. This community service program aims to improve the digital literacy skills of rural handicraft MSME actors in order to strengthen the promotion and marketing of village superior products. The program was conducted using a participatory empowerment approach through training, mentoring, and evaluation activities. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The results indicate that digital literacy training significantly improves the ability of MSME actors to utilize social media platforms, develop product branding strategies, and expand market reach. The program also encourages community awareness regarding the importance of digital transformation in sustaining local creative industries. Despite several challenges, such as limited technological infrastructure and initial resistance to digital adoption, the program demonstrates positive impacts on product visibility and economic opportunities. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy among rural handicraft MSMEs is essential for supporting sustainable village economic development.</p>

1. Introduction

The transformation of digital technology has significantly influenced economic development across various sectors, including rural economies. In recent years, digital platforms have become essential tools for business promotion and marketing activities. Rural communities, particularly those involved in handicraft MSMEs, possess significant potential to contribute to the creative economy. Handicraft products such as woven bamboo and rattan represent local cultural identity while providing economic opportunities for village communities.

Despite their economic and cultural value, many rural handicraft MSMEs still rely on conventional marketing methods, such as direct selling and local exhibitions. These traditional approaches limit product market reach and reduce competitiveness in the broader economic landscape. The lack of digital literacy among MSME actors becomes one of the primary barriers to utilizing digital marketing platforms effectively. According to recent studies, digital literacy is closely related to business sustainability and competitiveness, particularly in the digital economy era.

Furthermore, the Indonesian government has emphasized the importance of strengthening the creative economy as part of rural development strategies. The empowerment of handicraft MSMEs through digital transformation is expected to enhance product competitiveness, increase income, and promote village superior products at national and international levels. Therefore, community service programs focusing on digital literacy improvement are crucial in addressing these challenges.

1.1. Problem Formulation

Several problems were identified among rural handicraft MSMEs. First, the majority of MSME actors have limited knowledge of digital marketing platforms. Second, product promotion strategies are still dominated by conventional marketing methods, which restrict market expansion. Third, there is a lack of understanding regarding product branding and online marketing management. These challenges hinder the development of handicraft MSMEs and limit their contribution to the village creative economy.

1.2. Objective of Community Service

This community service program aims to improve the digital literacy skills of rural handicraft MSME actors. Specifically, the program focuses on enhancing participants' ability to utilize digital marketing platforms, develop branding strategies, and promote woven bamboo and rattan handicraft products effectively.

1.3. Program Benefits

The program provides academic benefits by contributing to the development of community empowerment models based on digital transformation. Practically, the program supports MSME actors in improving marketing strategies and business sustainability. Socially, it strengthens community awareness regarding the importance of digital technology in rural economic development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Literacy in Supporting MSME Competitiveness

Digital literacy refers to the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and utilize digital information effectively. It includes technical skills, cognitive understanding, and ethical awareness in using digital technology. Recent research highlights that digital literacy significantly influences business performance and innovation capacity among MSMEs.

The improvement of digital literacy enables MSME actors to utilize digital platforms for product promotion, customer interaction, and market analysis. Rural MSMEs with strong digital literacy skills tend to demonstrate higher competitiveness and adaptability to economic changes. Additionally, digital literacy supports business resilience, especially during economic disruptions such as global pandemics.

2.2. Creative Economy and Development of Rural Handicraft Products

The creative economy emphasizes innovation, creativity, and cultural values as primary economic drivers. Handicraft industries play a crucial role in the creative economy because they combine artistic expression with economic activities. Woven bamboo and rattan handicrafts represent traditional knowledge and local cultural heritage, making them valuable village superior products.

The development of handicraft MSMEs contributes to employment opportunities and income generation in rural communities. Moreover, creative economy development supports sustainable economic growth by utilizing local resources and promoting environmentally friendly production processes.

2.3. Digital Marketing Strategies for Handicraft MSMEs

Digital marketing refers to the utilization of digital platforms to promote products and services. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have become effective marketing tools for MSMEs due to their accessibility and broad audience reach. Digital marketing allows MSME actors to interact directly with consumers, promote product uniqueness, and develop brand identity.

Additionally, online marketplaces provide alternative distribution channels for handicraft products. Effective digital marketing strategies require product branding, attractive packaging design, and consistent content promotion. These strategies significantly improve product visibility and consumer engagement.

2.4. Community Empowerment through Training and Assistance Programs

Community empowerment focuses on improving community capacity through education, training, and participatory involvement. Training and mentoring activities enable MSME actors to acquire practical skills and apply new knowledge effectively. Participatory empowerment models encourage community involvement in program planning and implementation, increasing program sustainability and community ownership.

Community empowerment programs that integrate digital capacity building have been proven to enhance community independence and economic resilience. Through structured training activities, MSME actors are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills in adapting to technological advancements. These programs not only transfer technical knowledge but also foster entrepreneurial mindsets that emphasize innovation, creativity, and continuous learning. As a result, participants are more prepared to respond to market changes and consumer demands in the digital era.

Moreover, mentoring activities play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of empowerment programs. Continuous assistance allows facilitators to monitor participant progress, identify difficulties, and provide direct solutions to emerging challenges. Mentoring also strengthens trust between facilitators and community members, which increases participant motivation and engagement in program activities. This collaborative learning environment supports knowledge retention and practical skill application in business operations.

In addition, community empowerment through training and assistance contributes to strengthening social capital within rural communities. The establishment of cooperative learning groups encourages knowledge sharing, peer support, and collective problem-solving among MSME actors. This collaborative approach promotes the development of local economic networks and

enhances community solidarity. Consequently, empowerment programs not only improve individual business capacity but also support sustainable and inclusive rural economic development.

3. Methodology

3.1. Type and Approach of Community Service

This program applied a participatory empowerment approach. The approach emphasizes community involvement in identifying problems, designing solutions, and evaluating program outcomes. Training and mentoring activities were conducted to ensure knowledge transfer and skill development among participants.

This participatory empowerment approach also prioritizes collaborative decision-making between facilitators and community members. By involving MSME actors in every stage of program planning and implementation, participants develop a sense of ownership toward the program activities. Such involvement encourages active participation and increases the effectiveness of knowledge transfer processes. Community members are not positioned merely as program beneficiaries but as partners who contribute valuable local insights and experiences.

Furthermore, the participatory approach allows the program to be adapted to the specific socio-cultural characteristics of rural communities. Each village possesses unique traditions, economic patterns, and social structures that influence community engagement in development programs. Through direct interaction and participatory discussions, facilitators can design training materials and mentoring strategies that are relevant to the actual needs of handicraft MSME actors. This contextual adaptation increases program acceptance and enhances learning outcomes among participants.

In addition, the participatory empowerment model supports long-term capacity building by encouraging independent learning and innovation among MSME actors. Participants are trained to identify market opportunities, develop creative product variations, and explore digital marketing strategies independently after the program concludes. This approach ensures that the knowledge and skills gained during the community service program can be continuously applied and further developed, contributing to sustainable economic empowerment within rural communities.

3.2. Target Community

The target participants were rural MSME actors engaged in woven bamboo and rattan handicraft production. Participants consisted of small-scale entrepreneurs, home industry workers, and community craft groups.

The selection of these participants was based on their active involvement in traditional handicraft production and their significant role in sustaining local creative industries. Rural handicraft MSME actors, particularly those engaged in woven bamboo and rattan production, possess valuable traditional skills that have been passed down through generations. However, despite their strong craftsmanship capabilities, many of these entrepreneurs still face limitations in accessing broader markets and utilizing modern marketing technologies. Therefore, targeting this community group is essential to support both economic development and cultural preservation.

In addition, these MSME actors represent a productive economic sector that contributes to household income and rural employment opportunities. Many woven bamboo and rattan handicraft businesses operate as family-based home industries, involving multiple family members in the production process. This characteristic highlights the strategic importance of empowering these

MSMEs, as improvements in business performance directly influence community welfare and local economic stability. Strengthening their digital marketing capabilities is expected to create more sustainable income opportunities and enhance product competitiveness.

Furthermore, the involvement of community craft groups in the program encourages collective learning and knowledge sharing among participants. Group-based participation facilitates peer support, collaborative innovation, and cooperative marketing strategies. Through group interaction, participants are able to exchange experiences related to production techniques, product development, and market access challenges. This collaborative environment strengthens social networks among MSME actors and supports the development of integrated handicraft business ecosystems in rural areas.

3.3. Program Implementation Stages

The program was conducted through several stages. The first stage involved needs assessment to identify community challenges and digital literacy levels. The second stage consisted of digital marketing training sessions covering social media utilization, branding strategies, and online promotion techniques. The third stage involved mentoring activities, where participants practiced digital marketing applications with guidance from facilitators. The final stage included evaluation and monitoring to assess program effectiveness.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive qualitative methods to evaluate community participation, knowledge improvement, and program impact.

To ensure data validity and reliability, triangulation techniques were applied by comparing information obtained from different data collection methods. Observational data were cross-checked with interview responses and questionnaire results to provide comprehensive insights into participant learning progress and program effectiveness. This triangulation approach strengthens the credibility of research findings and minimizes potential bias that may arise from relying on a single data source.

Additionally, data interpretation focused on identifying patterns of behavioral change among participants after the training and mentoring activities. Indicators such as increased frequency of digital platform usage, improved content quality in product promotion, and enhanced participant confidence in conducting online marketing were analyzed as measures of program success. The analysis also considered participant feedback regarding training materials and mentoring methods to provide recommendations for future community service program improvements.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Potential of Rural Handicraft MSMEs

The assessment results indicate that rural communities possess strong potential in woven bamboo and rattan handicraft production. These products demonstrate unique artistic characteristics and cultural value. The availability of raw materials and traditional craftsmanship skills supports handicraft industry sustainability.

However, most handicraft products are marketed locally, limiting business growth opportunities. Product innovation and marketing expansion are required to increase product competitiveness in broader markets.

4.2. Initial Condition of Digital Literacy among MSME Actors

Initial assessment results reveal that most participants have limited knowledge of digital marketing platforms. Many MSME actors use mobile devices primarily for communication rather than business promotion. Additionally, participants lack understanding of content creation, branding, and online marketplace management.

This condition indicates the necessity of digital literacy training to enhance marketing skills and improve business competitiveness.

4.3. Implementation of Digital Marketing Training

Training activities focused on social media marketing strategies, product photography techniques, branding development, and marketplace utilization. Participants were trained to create business social media accounts, develop promotional content, and interact with potential consumers through digital platforms.

Mentoring sessions provided participants with practical experience in managing digital marketing activities. Participants demonstrated increased confidence in utilizing social media and online marketplaces for product promotion.

4.4. Impact of Digital Literacy Improvement on Product Promotion

The training program significantly improved participants' ability to promote handicraft products digitally. Participants successfully created business social media accounts and uploaded promotional content regularly. The digital marketing approach expanded product visibility and increased customer engagement.

Additionally, participants demonstrated improved understanding of product branding and packaging strategies. These improvements contribute to enhanced product attractiveness and competitiveness in the creative economy market.

4.5. Challenges and Sustainability Strategies

Several challenges were identified during program implementation, including limited internet infrastructure, technological adaptation difficulties among elderly participants, and inconsistent digital content management. To address these challenges, continuous mentoring and collaboration with village stakeholders are necessary.

Sustainability strategies include forming digital marketing community groups, conducting periodic training programs, and encouraging collaboration between MSME actors and local government institutions.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The community service program demonstrates that digital literacy improvement significantly enhances the promotion and marketing capability of rural handicraft MSMEs. Training and mentoring activities effectively improve participants' skills in utilizing digital marketing platforms, developing branding strategies, and expanding market reach. Digital transformation supports the development of village superior products and strengthens rural creative economy sustainability.

The findings of this program also highlight the importance of integrating digital literacy initiatives into long-term rural development policies. Sustainable empowerment of handicraft MSMEs requires continuous institutional support from village governments, educational institutions, and

community organizations. Strengthening collaboration among these stakeholders can create a supportive ecosystem that facilitates knowledge transfer, technology access, and business networking opportunities for rural entrepreneurs. Such collaboration is essential to ensure that digital transformation efforts can be maintained and expanded beyond the duration of community service programs.

Furthermore, the success of this program indicates that improving digital competencies among rural MSME actors contributes not only to economic growth but also to cultural preservation. Woven bamboo and rattan handicrafts represent valuable cultural heritage that reflects local identity and traditional craftsmanship. By promoting these products through digital platforms, rural communities can introduce their cultural products to broader markets while maintaining traditional production values. Therefore, digital literacy empowerment plays a strategic role in balancing economic advancement and cultural sustainability in rural creative industries.

5.2. Recommendations

Village governments should support digital infrastructure development and provide continuous training programs for MSME actors. MSME participants are encouraged to consistently apply digital marketing strategies and develop product innovation. Future community service programs should focus on strengthening digital business management and expanding collaborative marketing networks.

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