

## **EMPOWERING COMMUNITY-BASED MSMEs THROUGH INCLUSIVE CONTENT CREATION AND DIGITAL MARKETING TRAINING**

**Kurniawan PRASETYO<sup>1\*</sup>, Siti Muslichatul MAHMUDAH<sup>2</sup>, Rio MEILANDRI<sup>2</sup>**  
<sup>1,2,3</sup> *Universitas Mercu Buana, Jakarta, INDONESIA*  
*\*kurniawan.prasetyo@mercubuana.ac.id*

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents the community service program to develop the capacity of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the community through inclusive content development and digital marketing training. The program was implemented in South Tangerang and involved the vocational students with local MSMEs using a low barrier to access tools like Canva and WhatsApp to develop their digital skill heightening the actual technology potential of MSMEs. In the baseline reading, the MSME representatives expressed limited competencies in terms of digital marketing competencies and knowledge of inclusive communication. Participants engaged in participatory action research (PAR) for five subsequent workshops and a mentoring scheme to improve their skills and understandings of branding, visual storytelling, and the concepts of inclusive design. Based on various formative evaluations to capture audience feedback, a pre-post training evaluation demonstrated an increase of 72% on digital content-related skills, and 100% of participants incorporated inclusive elements, such as a variety of visual/image representation and captions that were accessible in their final projects. This initiative also supports the achievement of SDG 4, 8 and 9 by promoting quality education and lifelong learning with respect to economic empowerment for MSME enterprises, and innovation. Logistical barriers to digital content and sustained engagement continued to exist, but these findings can be leveraged to establish a viable, scalable model for digital transformation among grassroots entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** MSMEs, Digital Marketing, Inclusive Content, Community Empowerment, Participatory Training.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the robust pillars of Indonesian economic strength, consisting of more than 64.2 million business units and contributing more than 60% of the country's GDP. From that total, approximately 25.4 million MSMEs have penetrated the digital landscape, an increase from 21.38% of last year (Antara News, 2024). The majority of them are community-based MSMEs with local ownership, small scale of operation, and close linkages with local communities. In South Tangerang, for example, MSMEs continue to grow, particularly in creative fields such as culinary arts, fashion, and handicrafts.

In spite of this growth, digitalization across MSMEs is not even. As of 2024, a mere 65% of Indonesia's MSMEs have managed to utilize digital platforms, with about 35% still lacking digital capability (Aryo, 2024). This digital gap translates to missed opportunities for market growth, customer reach, and long-term competitiveness.

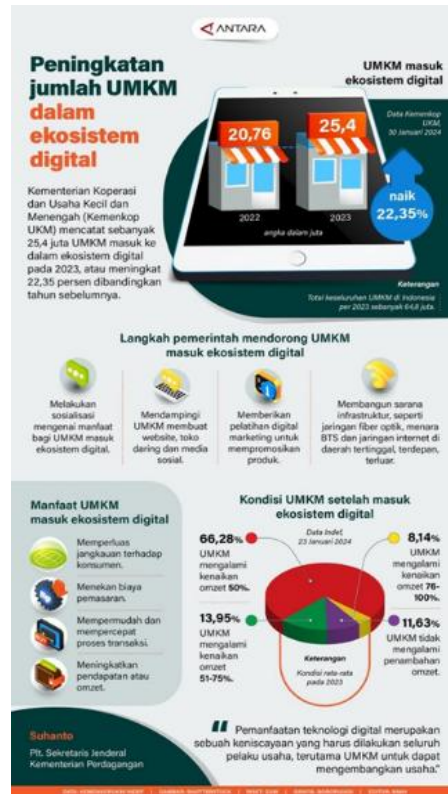


Figure 1. Increasing the number of MSMEs in the digital ecosystem

This community service work-program was offered at SMK Negeri 2 Tangerang Selatan, as a partnership with the South Tangerang City Government, which had MSMEs and vocational students as participants in the community. The majority of the MSMEs were Micro organizations whose average earnings range from IDR 5 to 10 million/month and were highly dependent on marketing their product using Instagram and WhatsApp. However, baseline surveys indicated that there were huge gaps in their digital marketing skills. One of the main issues uncovered is that there were low levels of skills in the technical side of content generation, primarily visual content generation. The majority of participants reported that they were not familiar with basic digital tools for design, and the manual skill for visual storytelling. There was also a clear unawareness of inclusive content, that is, sensitivity to the necessity of accessibility to the disabled and the necessity of communicating efficiently amidst linguistic and cultural diversity.

The other critical problem was ad hoc scheduling and unstructured use of social media platforms, leading to a lack of effective visibility of promotional content and weak customer engagement. These issues have clearly shown that there is an urgent need for targeted training and mentoring to digitally enable MSMEs to compete and survive in a digitally dominated marketplace. To add to the digital challenges, MSMEs face the challenges of economic and infrastructure challenges, reduced access to information technologies and limited training opportunities. However, the region is exhibiting a solid entrepreneurial dynamic through local government initiatives, and emerging interest in new digital industries from youth.

In light of the above, the goal of the community service program in general was to enable local MSMEs with a digital marketing training program enhanced with inclusive content creation. The program specifically focused on:

1. Include inclusive content principles so that MSMEs can reach broader and more diverse audiences;
2. Provide practical training on visual content creation, branding, and digital storytelling using digital tools, such as Canva, and mobile phone photography;

3. Assist participants with a three-month content calendar, as well as help them think through how to plan content across digital channels;
4. Assist in using analytics tools to measure content effectiveness in order to inform engagement strategy and actions.

This project aims to address the knowledge gap of digital marketing and inclusive communication and help support the sustainable growth and digital competitiveness of local MSMEs in the creative economy.

## 2. METHOD

This community service activity was in the form of Participatory Action Research (PAR) to support community-based MSMEs with organized training on inclusive content creation and online marketing. PAR is based on facilitator-learner collaboration and co-learning and is widely applied in community development interventions for ensuring contextual appropriateness and sustainability of results (Baum, 2006). Phases of the program were organized into six steps: (1) needs assessment, (2) training design, (3) implementation, (4) mentoring, (5) evaluation, and (6) planning for sustainability.

### 1. Needs Assessment

A baseline survey and interviews with 20 MSME owners in South Tangerang were undertaken to determine their existing level of digital marketing literacy, how to create content, and grasp of inclusive communication. The survey used contemporary frameworks to assess SME digital readiness (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). The results indicated that although most respondents already promoted their enterprises through Instagram and WhatsApp, usage was predominantly non-strategic and ad-hoc.

The majority of MSMEs reported that they practiced trial-and-error approaches to content development with few of them having knowledge about branding principles, audience targeting, or performance measurement. Moreover, the concept of inclusive content, applying accessibility features or addressing the needs of various audiences, was unfamiliar to most of the respondents. All these formed a strong ground upon which a training program was built that tackled directly the very gaps and needs of the target group.

### 2. Designing Training

After assessing the needs of what was identified as a gap in digital marketing in community-based MSMEs, a training module was designed. The training module first began with the principles of digital branding to develop participant meanings of integrated and recognizable branding online. Then included an inclusive content-development workshop with a focus on representation and accessibility to allow digital messaging to get to multiple people across heterogeneous communities, including multicultural and disability communities.

They were then taken through the step of developing visual content using simple mobile tools and platforms like Canva that gave them the opportunity to develop promotional content with very little technical barrier. The training module also addressed content planning and dissemination strategies, especially through widely popular social media platforms among MSMEs like Instagram and WhatsApp, with the aim of having ongoing and strategic engagements with the audience. Finally, the trainees were introduced to digital analytical tools like Instagram Insights to allow them to monitor the performance of their content and make evidence-based adjustment of their marketing efforts. The training utilized experiential learning methods like simulations and practical design exercises shown to be effective in digital skills training for SMEs.

### 3. Training Implementation

The program had four workshops (4–5 hours per session) and fortnightly online mentoring for two months. The workshops comprised content creation laboratories, peer review, and one-to-one technical support, which enabled students to learn by doing in a facilitative environment. The students were motivated to produce live digital content and a three-month content calendar plan, which improved their planning and consistency of digital marketing performance (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020).

In each session, the learners acquired skills in using tools such as Canva, benefited from group discussions on messaging strategy, and received personalized feedback on drafts of their content. This structure helped

them develop slowly but surely in technical as well as creative skills. The interaction of intensive workshop sessions with ongoing mentoring was instrumental in creating learning outcomes and enhancing the confidence of learners in managing their own digital marketing campaigns.

#### 4. Content Guidance and Mentoring

Following the initial training sessions, the members received weekly mentoring on assessment and improvement of the digital content they had created. The follow-up part offered regular, interactive mentorship according to each MSME's individual requirements. The mentoring touched on some of the most important areas including enhancing the quality of visual design to establish brand attractiveness in emerging markets, and inclusion of engagement content like contests, quizzes, and polls to ensure maximum level of audience participation. Participants are also able to enhance their hashtag strategies and storytelling strategies to better engage with their respective target markets.

This comes from the "learning-by-doing" philosophy, where practice-based application comes first as a way of re-validating digital marketing competences. Such experience-based learning frameworks, as verified by Lamberton & Stephen (2016), are best suited to facilitate learning for small businesses on how to compete in very dynamic digital environments.

#### 5. Evaluation

The efficacy of the program was evaluated by utilizing a pre- and post-test to determine an improvement in knowledge and confidence level of the subjects in content creation. Beyond testing, the quality of content produced by the subjects was checked for inclusivity and consistency to determine if they had been able to implement principles learned during training. Metrics to measure digital engagement, likes, comments, and shares were monitored before and after the intervention to provide an indication of the real-time effect of improved content activities.

In addition, a participant satisfaction survey was administered to gather opinions regarding the perceived worth, applicability, and accessibility of the training modules. This mixed-methods assessment approach, which includes quantitative and qualitative indicators, represents best practices in the measurement of the effectiveness of digital upskilling programs for small business owners, as suggested by Ahmad et al. (2019).

#### 6. Sustainability Planning

The final focus group interview (FGD) with the MSME participants and local stakeholders was conducted to discuss program achievements and develop continuity planning. Participants provided valuable feedback on what was learned, what remains to be done, and recommendations for future improvements. The discussion ensured that the program did not only share near-term success but also mapped the future of community engagement to long-term participation.

To facilitate continuous learning and mentorship, a WhatsApp support group has been established where MSMEs are able to exchange digital marketing experiences, resources, and tips with one another. The platform is a level-playing field where the group members can

pose questions, give content suggestions, and encourage one another. In addition, the local government officials were also interested in implementing identical digital training in future SME development programs, hence creating the possibility of scaling up and institutionalizing the program at the regional level.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Improvement in Digital Content Creation Skills

As per pre- and post-training tests, participants' abilities at developing digital content were significantly improved. Post-test results averaged 72% improvement, and this indicates highly strong improvement in participants' branding, visual design, and inclusive communication knowledge. This result is in alignment with prior research evidence that has shown that specialized digital training improves digital literacy and creative skills among micro-entrepreneurs (Rageh Ismail et al., 2011).

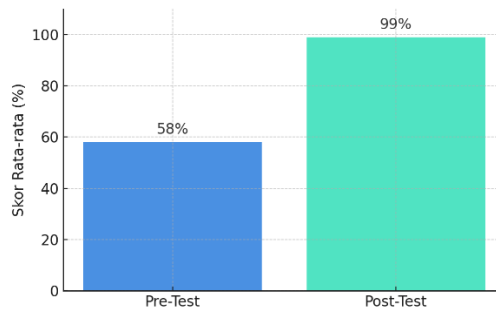


Figure 2. Pre and Post Test

The subjects were capable of creating 5–10 original content pieces per subject, with the incorporation of visual, product messaging, and accessible storytelling. The generated content contained increased aesthetic value, consistency of like branding elements (color schemes, typography, and logos), and consideration of accessibility factors such as readable fonts and accessible representation.

This study demonstrates that experiential and participatory learning approaches provided visible effectiveness in online digital upskilling programs. The use of apps such as Canva provided accessible user-friendly design access with low-barriers for novice learners. Moreover, hands-on labs utilized within digital upskilling programs create more opportunities for users to retain information. Kolb (2014) contends that the most effective way to learn skills is when learners actively involve themselves in using new knowledge. The implementation of inclusive design principles also resonates with rising patterns in ethical digital communication, which focus on making sure that marketing documents reach more individuals, for example, individuals with disabilities (Kent et al., 2018).

These results also align with a community service initiative on Student with disabilities empowerment in SKh YKDW 03 Tangerang through social media literacy. Both activities demonstrate the necessity for empowerment and inclusion in digital spaces, and show that exposing vulnerable populations - those like people with disabilities, and MSMEs based in communities - to access, guided learning opportunities and experiential learning, they can substantially improve their digital literacy and their capacity in visual communication. As the special needs students began to voice themselves creatively via social media after extensive training workshops, likewise, MSME entrepreneurs involved in this initiative also show substantial improvement in producing inclusive and visually enhanced content. Such convergent outcomes attest to the merit of participatory learning strategies and strategic use of social media as capacity-building tools in inclusive and collaborative digital platforms(Prasetyo et al., 2025).

### Awareness and Implementation of Inclusive Content Principles

Before the program, 15% of respondents had ever heard of or even considered implementing inclusive communication approaches in internet marketing. After program completion, 100% of respondents embedded at least one aspect of inclusion, for example inclusive images, gender-neutral language, or captioned texts into work.

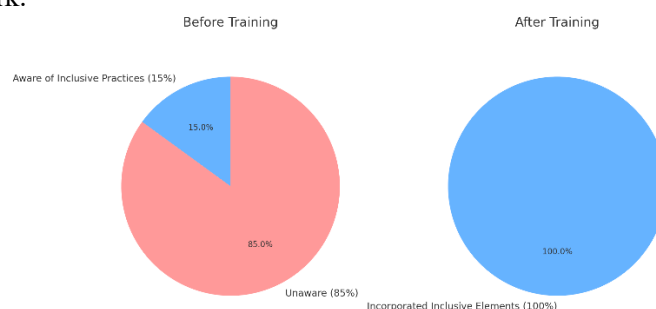


Figure 3. Before and After Training

This finding is an attitude shift in which MSMEs are discovered to adopt inclusive practices after they understand the idea and observe how it can be implemented. Establishing a brand's diversity and inclusion culture can also be beneficial. Because it fosters possibilities for constructive connections with a variety of audiences and raises brand awareness and authenticity, a culture of diversity and inclusion may greatly enhance marketing and brand perception (Verbytska et al., 2023). These are beautiful shifts for making sure that there is even digital participation, especially in multicultural societies like Indonesia.

## Contribution to SGDs

The outcomes of this community service program directly contribute to the achievement of several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4, SDG 8, and SDG 9.

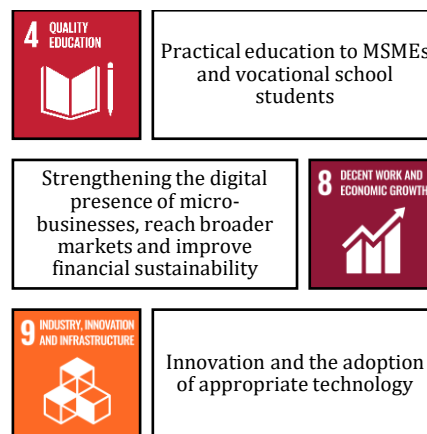


Figure 4. SDGs Support

**SDG 4: Quality Education.** The program supports universal and equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities through the empowerment of MSME owners and vocational education students with necessary digital advertising skills to better enable them to create content that is inclusive and effective. This fulfills the objectives of SDG 4, which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals. The use of participatory action research (PAR) supports learning together and enables members of a community to share the information and knowledge that they learn beyond the classroom training. Through digital capacity development, the program has worked towards empowering community members to provide the needed skills to close the gaps in education, particularly with marginalized groups in society, and thus make society more digitally literate.

**SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.** By developing MSMEs' digital marketing capabilities, the project fosters decent work and sustainable local economic growth. Increased digital capacities improve the capacity of MSMEs to penetrate the market more, respond better to customers, and ultimately achieve higher incomes, hence improving the resilience of the local economy. The employability of the youth is also addressed through the training with the inclusion of vocational students, equipping the future of work with the right skills to match the digital economy. All these guarantee SDG 8 productive employment, entrepreneurship, and development of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises goals.

**SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure.** The program facilitates adoption of digital technologies by MSMEs, innovation, and advancement of local industry within the creative economy. By applying the use of existing design programs, social media analysis, and content strategy, the participants are able to leverage the infrastructure of the digital space for business growth. This corresponds with the emphasis of SDG 9 on infrastructure resilience, industrialization that is inclusive and sustainable, and innovation.

Moreover, by establishing peer learning networks with WhatsApp groups and collaborations with the municipal government and schools, the program establishes pillars for scalable digital ecosystems that support MSME expansion.

### **Future Development Opportunities**

This program revealed several opportunities for future development:

1. Scaling up and replication to other locations, especially under-served urban and rural areas where high MSME concentrations are present.
2. Incorporating additional advanced modules, such as video editing, customer profiling, and online e-commerce management.
3. Partnership with vocational schools and local authorities to develop continuous digital capability-building programs.
4. Designing a digital platform or a mobile app specifically for MSMEs to utilize templates, tutorials, and live mentorship.

In addition, this program further can be widened to special groups like women-owned businesses and disability-owned businesses so that digital transformation in Indonesia is fair and inclusive.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This community engagement program was successful in enhancing the online marketing capacity for community-based MSMEs through formal training in inclusive content creation. This program created a very high level of knowledge and skill increase among the participants as demonstrated by a 72% increase in post-assessment scores, as well as the later integrative use of inclusive communication elements in their productions. Its participatory approach, use of simple-to-operate tools like Canva, and emphasis on inclusiveness were the strengths of the program that enabled even micro-entrepreneurs with very little prior experience to adopt digital practices effectively. However, the program also had certain limitations, particularly in long-term engagement due to time constraints and disparities in digital literacy among participants. There are also infrastructural shortcomings, e.g., unavailability of stable internet or devices, that still keep hindering certain MSMEs. Future development has to focus on program expansion to other regions, incorporating advanced modules like analytics and e-commerce, as well as developing an online framework for constant learning. Program expansion to women-owned business and persons with disabilities will also enhance the inclusiveness and coverage of digital transformation. Overall, the program significantly contributes to MSME sustainable development and Indonesia's transition towards a more inclusive digital economy.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This community service program was supported by Universitas Mercu Buana through the 2024 Community Engagement Grant Scheme. The authors would like to express sincere appreciation to the South Tangerang City Government and SMK Negeri 2 Tangerang Selatan for their active collaboration, as well as all MSME participants whose enthusiasm and commitment greatly contributed to the success of this initiative.

## 5. REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S. Z., Abu Bakar, A. R., & Ahmad, N. (2019). Social media adoption and its impact on firm performance: the case of the UAE. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(1), 84–111. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-08-2017-0299>
- Antara News. (2024, May 28). *Peningkatan jumlah UMKM dalam ekosistem digital*. <https://www.antaranews.com/infografik/4123635/Peningkatan-Jumlah-Umkm-Dalam-Ekosistem-Digital>.
- Aryo, R. (2024, September 8). *Kurangnya Pengetahuan Digital pada UMKM menjadi Tantangan dalam Era Digital Halaman*. <https://www.kompasiana.com/Rifkyaryo3883/66dda373c925c45a834adf73/Kurangnya-Pengetahuan-Digital-Pada-Umkm-Menjadi-Tantangan-Dalam-Era-Digital#:~:Text=Menurut%20data%20dari%20Kementerian%20Koperasi,Optimal%20dalam%20operasional%20bisnis%20mereka>.
- Baum, F. (2006). Participatory action research. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 60(10), 854–857. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2004.028662>
- Chatterjee, S., & Kumar Kar, A. (2020). Why do small and medium enterprises use social media marketing and what is the impact: Empirical insights from India. *International Journal of Information Management*, 53, 102103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102103>
- Kent, M., Ellis, K., & Giles, M. (2018). Students with Disabilities and eLearning in Australia: Experiences of Accessibility and Disclosure at Curtin University. *TechTrends*, 62(6), 654–663. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-018-0337-y>
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential Learning: Experience As The Source Of Learning And Development*. <http://www.learningfromexperience.com/images/uploads/process-of-experiential-learning.pdf>
- Lamberton, C., & Stephen, A. T. (2016). A Thematic Exploration of Digital, Social Media, and Mobile Marketing: Research Evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an Agenda for Future Inquiry. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 146–172. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0415>
- Prasetyo, K., Kusumadipraja, A., Setiawan, S. T., Safitri, A. A., & Anargya, A. (2025). Transformasi Digital untuk Disabilitas Melalui Kuliah Peduli Negeri: Pemanfaatan Media Sosial bagi Siswa Sekolah Khusus. In *TRANSFORMASI KOMUNIKASI DIGITAL MENUJU INDONESIA BERKELANJUTAN: KOMUNIKASI DIGITAL DAN INOVASI BAGI MASYARAKAT* (pp. 47–58). PT Elex Media Komputindo.
- Rageh Ismail, A., TC Melewar, Lim, L., & Woodside, A. (2011). Customer experiences with brands: Literature review and research directions. *The Marketing Review*, 11(3), 205–225. <https://doi.org/10.1362/146934711x589435>
- Taiminen, H. M., & Karjaluo, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633–651. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-05-2013-0073>
- Verbytska, A., Lysenko, I., Babachenko, L., & Kraskivska, N. (2023). Inclusive Social Marketing: Representation and Diversity in Brand Campaigns. *Marketing and Branding Research*, 10, 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.32038/mbr.2023.10.01.04>