

## Digital Marketing Outreach for Strengthening Student Entrepreneurship at Pondok Nahrul Hayah, Yogyakarta

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Community Service, Digital Marketing, Pondok Entrepreneurship, Student Empowerment, Literacy

*Received :* 09, March

*Revised :* 11, April

*Accepted:* 13, May

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### ABSTRACT

This community service outreach activity aimed to enhance digital marketing literacy among underprivileged university students at Pondok Nahrul Hayah, Yogyakarta. It introduced basic digital marketing concepts, the urgency of digital transformation, and the traffic leads conversion framework. The outreach was implemented in four phases problem identification, preparation, implementation, and evaluation and involved 31 student participants. Conducted offline on March 25, 2024, the outreach showed a significant increase in understanding, with average pre-and post-test scores improving from 2.46 to 4.17 and interest in further learning reaching 4.81 (scale 1-5). The outreach successfully bridged knowledge gaps and boosted entrepreneurial confidence. It is recommended that future outreach programs include hands-on sessions, such as content creation, business account setup, and the practical use of social media promotion strategies.

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## INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become a major driving force in redefining the global entrepreneurial ecosystem. In the era of a technology-based economy, digital marketing is a crucial component that not only expands market reach but also enables efficient, data-driven, and measurable engagement (Sharabati et al., 2024). As of February 2025, global internet users reached 5.56 billion, or 67.9% of the world population (Petrosyan, 2025), while in Indonesia, users exceeded 212 million (Kemp, 2025). This digital landscape presents both vast opportunities and new challenges for entrepreneurs, particularly in adapting and integrating digital strategies into their business practices.

Digital marketing offers several advantages, including cost-effective promotion, accurate audience targeting, personalized messaging, and real-time performance analytics (Gensler & Rangaswamy, 2025; Jung & Shegai, 2023). Empirical studies confirm that business actors who adopt digital strategies systematically tend to achieve stronger business growth than those relying solely on traditional approaches (Matalamäki & Joensuu-Salo, 2022). Consequently, digital marketing literacy is no longer optional; it has become a fundamental competency for young entrepreneurs, including university students.

Despite this urgency, many entrepreneurs still struggle with the readiness to adopt digital tools. The INDEF Report (2024) found that over 66.4% of Indonesian MSMEs have not fully implemented digital marketing, primarily due to low digital literacy, limited human resources, and lack of access to structured learning (Maulana et al., 2022; Rahayuningsih et al., 2024). Although the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digitalization, it also widened the digital divide—particularly among emerging entrepreneurs and those within informal education settings (Calvino et al., 2024; Rückert et al., 2021). Community-based outreach programs are, therefore, essential to bridge this gap through inclusive and transformative approaches.

Pondok Nahrul Hayah Sosrodiningratan is a non-formal student residence in Yogyakarta that accommodates underprivileged university students from various institutions. Although it is not a traditional Islamic boarding school, the pondok seeks to foster economic self-reliance among its residents by cultivating an entrepreneurial spirit. As part of this effort, the pondok operates business units such as poultry and catering services, which the students collectively manage. However, initial assessments indicate that the promotional strategies used remain conventional and have not yet leveraged digital platforms effectively. Limited digital marketing literacy has emerged as a key barrier to expanding market reach and building a more competitive brand identity in the digital landscape.

In response, the Community Service (PKM) team from Janabadra University conducted an outreach activity titled *"Introduction to Digital Marketing Concepts for Strengthening Student Entrepreneurship in the Technological Era."* This outreach aimed to provide participants with foundational knowledge and conceptual frameworks on digital marketing as a strategic step toward adaptive and sustainable entrepreneurship. The activity is expected to serve as an initial

platform for building digital literacy among Pondok-based student entrepreneurs in a structured, contextual, and applicative manner.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS**

The Universitas Janabadra team conducted this community service program to strengthen digital marketing literacy among the student residents of Pondok Nahrul Hayah Sosrodiningratan, Yogyakarta. Although the pondok operates small-scale business units such as poultry and catering services, it has yet to adopt digital strategies for promotion. Therefore, this outreach initiative focused on enhancing participants' foundational understanding of digital marketing through contextual and participatory learning methods. The term "outreach" in this program refers to a conceptual and participatory community education activity to enhance student entrepreneurs' understanding of digital marketing through interactive learning and contextual discussion.

The program was implemented in four main phases:

1. Problem Identification Phase

The team conducted a preliminary needs assessment through direct observation and informal interviews with santri and business managers. The aim was to obtain a factual overview of the existing promotional practices, which relied heavily on conventional word-of-mouth methods. The findings revealed that, although the businesses were operational, understanding digital marketing strategies remained limited. Participants expressed strong enthusiasm and interest in learning more about digital tools, provided the content was accessible and relevant to their context.

2. Preparation Phase

The team developed outreach materials tailored to the participants' digital literacy levels based on the initial assessment. The content covered essential digital marketing concepts, appropriate channels for microbusinesses (e.g., WhatsApp Business and Instagram), and the basic traffic-leads-conversion framework. Coordination with pondok management was conducted to finalize the schedule, venue, and participant list. The modules were designed in a visual, narrative, and case-based format to accommodate participants with limited technical backgrounds.

3. Outreach Implementation Phase

The offline outreach session was conducted on March 25, 2024, in the pondok's main hall. The session employed interactive lectures and participatory discussions facilitated by the PKM team. Real-world examples from participants' existing business activities were used to contextualize the material. The 60-minute session was attended by 31 active participants, who engaged actively by posing questions, sharing experiences, and exploring the application of digital strategies within their business contexts.

#### 4. Evaluation and Reflection Phase

Post-session evaluation was conducted through a structured questionnaire aligned with the pre-test indicators to assess knowledge improvement. Additionally, a reflective discussion was held to collect qualitative feedback regarding the content and delivery of the outreach session. Results indicated a notable increase in participants' understanding and interest in applying basic digital marketing strategies. These findings form the basis for recommending more practice-oriented follow-up programs.



**Figure 1. Stages of Implementation of Community Service Programs**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Field observations and informal interviews conducted by the PKM team from Janabadra University at Pondok Nahrul Hayah Sosrodingratan, Yogyakarta, revealed that several students had initiated independent businesses, such as poultry and catering. However, their promotional efforts remained limited to traditional methods, including verbal communication and local networks. There was no evidence of using social media, business accounts, or other digital strategies in their marketing activities. This limited digital marketing literacy emerged as a significant barrier to expanding market reach and enhancing the brand visibility of the students' businesses.

These findings reflect a common challenge MSMEs face in Indonesia: the low utilization of digital technology due to limited access to training and mentoring (Handayati et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2024). Hernita et al. (2021) and Popescu et al. (2020) emphasize that sustainable economic empowerment requires technological proficiency, broad market access, and adaptive managerial capabilities. Therefore, the community service team recognized the importance of implementing an outreach-based intervention through contextual and practical digital marketing literacy sessions.

In response to these conditions, an outreach session themed, "Introduction to the Concept of Digital Marketing to Strengthen Student Entrepreneurship in the Technological Era" was held on March 25, 2024, in the Nahrul Hayah Islamic Boarding School hall. This activity was attended by 31 students who actively manage business units, with Andika as the main speaker. Before the session started, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to measure their initial understanding of digital marketing. The results of the pre-test are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participants' Initial Knowledge Level Regarding Digital Marketing**

| No | Knowledge Indicators                                                               | Average Score | Category |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| 1  | Knowing the general meaning of digital marketing                                   | 2,46          | Low      |
| 2  | Understanding the key goals of digital marketing                                   | 2,46          | Low      |
| 3  | Know the types of digital channels (social media, YouTube, SEO, etc.)              | 2             | Very Low |
| 4  | Understand the difference between organic and paid traffic.                        | 2             | Very Low |
| 5  | Know the basic stages of digital marketing (build a page, find traffic, follow up) | 1.85          | Very Low |

The pre-test results showed that participants' understanding of digital marketing remained low to very low. Although the two initial indicators – general understanding and digital marketing goals – were slightly higher, a score of 2.46 still showed conceptual limitations. The other three indicators related to practice, such as digital promotion channels, types of promotions, and stages of strategy, were below a score of 2.0 and were in the very low category. This condition indicates a significant knowledge gap that must be bridged through structured outreach-based interventions.

In response, the PKM team prepared outreach materials based on the basic principles of digital marketing, which were adjusted to the context of micro-businesses based on the pondok community. The material is delivered visually and participatively through interactive lectures, case studies, and group discussions. The goal is to introduce the concept of digital marketing not as an abstract theory but as a real solution that can be implemented gradually according to the capacity of the participants.



**Figure 2. Presentation of Outreach Materials**

The presentation began by explaining the urgency of digital transformation in entrepreneurial practices. An inspirational quote from Bill Gates— "*If your business is not on the internet, then your business will be out of business*" — was used to open up participants' understanding of the importance of digital presence in today's business strategy. The discussion then progressed to the weaknesses of conventional promotions that participants have been using, such as verbal communication, which is increasingly limited in effectiveness as digital consumer behavior changes.

Furthermore, participants were introduced to the definition of digital marketing as a marketing activity through various digital channels such as social media, websites, emails, and mobile applications. Emphasis is placed on the characteristics that set it apart from traditional promotions: its more expansive reach, cost flexibility, and real-time performance measurement capabilities. The presenter used real examples of student businesses, such as catering menu promotions or the sale of cut chicken, to explain how this strategy can be implemented but has a significant impact.



**Figure 3. Outreach Participants**

The core part of the outreach explains the strategic flow of digital marketing: traffic →, leads, → conversion. Participants are invited to understand that the success of digital promotion is not just about uploading content but requires a structured strategy to attract visitors (traffic), build interest (leads), and lead to purchase actions (conversions). This understanding became a new concept for many participants and sparked an active discussion about the opportunities and obstacles to its application in their business. The session continued by dissecting the two primary traffic sources: organic (free) and paid (ad-based). The speaker emphasized that micro business actors such as students can start with organic promotion through WhatsApp Business, Instagram, or digital catalogs. This strategy is considered more appropriate for their limited resources, but they can still reach a wider audience consistently.

To strengthen their understanding of the applicability, participants were introduced to three main steps in digital marketing, namely: (1) building an offer page (Landing page/Website), (2) attracting traffic with simple promotions, and (3) following *up* to maintain customer loyalty. These three steps are discussed through simulations and light case studies so that participants can imagine their application in daily activities. The discussion during the session showed a shift in participants' understanding and attitude. Some students who previously thought digital promotion was complicated and expensive realized that many strategies can be done for free and gradually. They also start to understand that success is not determined by the size of capital but by consistency, proper segmentation, and creativity in conveying the message. The active participation of participants is reflected in various questions, reflective responses, and initiatives to start trying out post-activity digital promotions.

Overall, this outreach session not only improved the participants' conceptual understanding but also fostered their confidence to start integrating digital strategies in business promotion. The material proved relevant and applicable and opened up opportunities for developing advanced programs that were more technical and practical.

As part of the final evaluation, the activity was closed with a post-test to measure the improvement of participants' understanding after outreach. The post-test instrument is compiled using the same indicators as the pre-test to ensure consistency and validity of the comparison. In addition to measuring the cognitive aspect, the post-test also evaluates the change in participants' perception of the importance of digital marketing in their business development. The post-test results are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Knowledge Results After Outreach**

| No | Comprehension Indicators                                                                 | Average Score | Category |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| 1  | Explaining the meaning of digital marketing                                              | 4.17          | High     |
| 2  | Understanding the main objectives of digital marketing                                   | 3.78          | Medium   |
| 3  | Identifying types of digital promotion channels                                          | 3.89          | Medium   |
| 4  | Distinguishing between organic and paid traffic                                          | 4.06          | High     |
| 5  | Understanding the stages of digital marketing (build page →, drive traffic →, follow-up) | 3.01          | Medium   |
| 6  | Interest in learning more about digital marketing                                        | 4.81          | High     |

Table 2 shows a significant increase in participants' level of understanding after participating in the outreach session. The average score of understanding the definition of digital marketing increased from 2.46 in the pre-test to 4.17 in the post-test, or an increase of 1.71 points. Similarly, the indicator of the ability to distinguish between organic and paid promotions jumped from 2.00 to 4.06 (+2.06 points). All indicators have increased to the medium to high category, which reflects the program's success in bridging the digital literacy gap of participants in real terms. This achievement confirms the effectiveness of the interactive and contextual approach used and the suitability of the material to the needs of Pondok-based micro-businesses.

The indicator "More interested in learning Digital Marketing" obtained the highest score (4.81), indicating that the outreach session not only improves cognitive aspects but also arouses participants' intrinsic motivation and interest to continue learning independently. These findings are an essential foundation for the program's sustainability, considering that digital transformation in entrepreneurship requires a continuous learning process.

On the other hand, the indicator related to understanding the stages of digital marketing namely building an offer page, driving traffic, and conducting follow-ups scored 3.01, which falls into the medium category and is the lowest among all indicators. This suggests that technical aspects remain challenging and require further support through hands-on, practical training. Therefore, follow-up training on implementational skills such as managing business accounts, producing promotional content, and optimizing digital channels is highly recommended.

Overall, the post-test results reinforce the conclusion that the outreach program successfully improved the digital literacy of the santri, both in terms of foundational knowledge and readiness to adopt digital marketing strategies. Positive participant responses during discussions and consistent score increases across all indicators demonstrate that the program had a tangible impact on preparing the santri to engage in technology-based entrepreneurship.

As a follow-up, the administrators of Pondok Nahrul Hayah expressed appreciation for the program and proposed the development of continued training in a more practice-oriented format. This proposal reflects an understanding that technical mastery must complement conceptual knowledge for digital transformation to be fully implemented. The PKM team from Universitas Janabadra welcomed this initiative and is committed to designing further mentoring programs to strengthen digital entrepreneurial capacity within the pondok community. At the closing of the activity, a documentation session was held in the form of a group photo between participants, presenters, and the implementation team (Figure 4). This documentation is not only a visual record but also a symbol of collaboration between universities and the Islamic boarding school community in building inclusive and sustainable digital entrepreneurship literacy.



**Figure 4. Group Photo After the Outreach Session**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The digital marketing outreach program at Pondok Nahrul Hayah Sosrodiningratan successfully enhanced students' understanding and awareness of the importance of technology-based marketing strategies in developing micro-enterprises. The improvement in all post-test indicators demonstrates the effectiveness of the outreach intervention in bridging the digital literacy gap, both in terms of conceptual knowledge and attitudes toward digital transformation. The practically designed materials and participatory delivery methods effectively fostered participants' confidence and readiness to integrate digital marketing into their business activities independently.

Based on these results, it is recommended that follow-up programs focus on more advanced technical training, such as managing digital business accounts, creating visual promotional content, and simulating social media marketing campaigns. Developing a sustainable mentoring program through collaboration between universities and the pondok community is also necessary. This approach will not only strengthen the students' entrepreneurial capacity progressively but also support a more inclusive and contextual technology-based economic empowerment agenda.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The PKM team of Janabadra University sincerely extends their gratitude to all students, administrators, and the entire community of Pondok Nahrul Hayah Sosrodiningratan, Yogyakarta, for their support, enthusiasm, and active participation throughout the outreach program. Special appreciation is also directed to LP3M Janabadra University for their facilitation and financial support, which enabled the successful implementation of this outreach initiative. The collaboration and involvement of all parties played a vital role in the success of this community service activity as a foundational step in strengthening digital entrepreneurship within the pondok environment.

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