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Content Marketing Training to Improve Product Competitiveness in the Digital Age for Vegetable Product MSMEs

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

This community service program aims to improve the competitiveness of vegetable product MSMEs through Content Marketing training. The activity is designed to help business actors understand relevant digital marketing strategies in the modern era. The implementation method includes four stages, namely preparation, training, mentoring, and evaluation, which lasts for one month. The training covers visual content creation, caption writing, social media management, and content calendar preparation. The program results show an increase in participants' knowledge, technical skills in content creation, and consistency in digital promotion. In addition, there has been an increase in social media interaction and audience reach. This program has positive implications for strengthening branding and the competitiveness of MSMEs in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

Kediri Regency is widely recognized as one of the agricultural centers in East Java with strong potential in the cultivation and distribution of fresh vegetables. Supported by fertile soil conditions, adequate water availability, and a favorable tropical climate, this region is capable of producing a variety of vegetables such as mustard greens, spinach, kale, chili peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, long beans, and several other horticultural commodities throughout the year. The abundance of agricultural produce does not only meet the daily needs of the local population but also contributes to the economic vitality of surrounding villages. In fact, these conditions have encouraged the growth of various Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in vegetable processing, packaging, and distribution across local markets within Kediri Regency and neighboring districts. These MSMEs play a vital role in strengthening the agricultural value chain, creating job opportunities, and improving the income of rural communities.

One of the MSMEs that has gained strong recognition among local consumers is "Romi Sayur," a family-owned business managed by Mr. Romi. For more than fifteen years, this MSME has consistently provided high-quality and fresh vegetables at affordable prices. The business serves the daily needs of households through a subscription-based distribution system and direct selling activities at traditional markets. Over time, Romi Sayur has become a trusted source of fresh produce for its loyal customers. However, the rapid development of digital technology, combined with changes in consumer behavior toward more digital-oriented shopping patterns, has placed new demands on MSMEs, including Romi Sayur. To remain competitive and relevant, businesses can no longer rely solely on traditional methods of marketing but must adapt to digital platforms that enable wider market reach.

Despite the potential, many MSME owners, including those in the vegetable sector, still depend heavily on conventional marketing practices—face-to-face sales, word-of-mouth promotion, and direct delivery to long-term customers. Meanwhile, today's consumers are increasingly turning to social media, e-commerce platforms, and online search tools to find product information, compare prices, and evaluate product quality. Visual content such as photos, videos, infographics, and customer testimonials has become a crucial aspect of digital purchasing decisions. Unfortunately, limited digital literacy and a lack of understanding of effective digital marketing techniques especially Content Marketing—have hindered vegetable-based MSMEs like Romi Sayur from reaching broader audiences and attracting younger, tech-savvy consumers.

(Kotler & Keller, 2016) emphasize that modern marketing success is influenced not only by product quality but also by how businesses communicate their value through digital channels. Content Marketing, as defined by (Pulizzi, 2014), is a strategic approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain clearly defined audiences—and ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. A study conducted by (Himawan, 2019) further supports this concept, revealing that MSMEs utilizing digital content effectively experience notable improvements in brand awareness

and sales growth. Additionally, research by (Harwida, 2025) indicates a significant relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchasing decisions, reinforcing the crucial role of digital presence for small businesses.

Moreover, (Kusendang et al., 2023) found that MSMEs who received structured digital marketing training showed improvements in business performance, especially in terms of market reach, product competitiveness, and customer engagement. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening digital capabilities among MSME actors to survive in an increasingly competitive business landscape. For a business like Romi Sayur, which already has strong product quality and loyal customers, the implementation of Content Marketing strategies supported by proper training and consistent mentoring can serve as a transformative step in improving brand image, expanding market reach, building stronger customer relationships, and increasing sales through modern marketing approaches.

Considering these circumstances, there is an urgent need for community service programs that focus on enhancing digital marketing skills for vegetable-product MSMEs in Kediri Regency. A targeted capacity-building program, especially in Content Marketing, will not only help business owners improve their ability to create engaging visual content and craft compelling product narratives but also enable them to build stronger digital branding strategies. These skills are essential for businesses like Romi Sayur to sustain their operations, increase competitiveness, and adapt to the rapidly evolving digital economy. By equipping MSME entrepreneurs with relevant knowledge and practical skills, such training programs have the potential to significantly elevate the value of local agricultural products in the digital age.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

This community service activity is carried out using a participatory-educational approach, in which MSMEs vegetable product producers are actively involved in the entire training and mentoring process. This method aims to ensure that participants are not only recipients of information, but also active subjects in the application of Content Marketing strategies for their businesses. This community service activity will be carried out through four main stages, namely:

1. Preparation
2. Training
3. Mentoring
4. Evaluation And Follow-Up

The entire series of activities is designed to be carried out over a period of 1 month, with a proportional and systematic division of time so that the results achieved can be optimal. This stage structure refers to the Experiential Learning Model approach updated by (Kurt, 2020), in which the community learning process takes place through a cycle of real experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active application. In the context of community service,

the community as participants not only receive information (passive learning) but also actively experience and apply it through intensive mentoring.

Preparation

Preparation is an important phase in building the foundation for a successful program. At this stage, partner needs are mapped out, training materials are prepared, and technical coordination is carried out. These activities are in line with the principles of the Design Thinking Model (Hoolohan & Browne, 2020), particularly the "Empathize" and "Define" stages, which emphasize the importance of understanding field conditions and designing relevant and contextual solutions.

1. Initial survey of vegetable MSMEs actors to determine business profiles, levels of understanding of digital marketing, and training needs.
2. Coordination with village officials and MSMEs partners, including Romi Sayur, to build collaboration for the implementation of activities.
3. Development of training modules covering basic to advanced material on Content Marketing, such as: visual content creation, persuasive caption writing, utilization of social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp Business), and content calendar management.

Training

The training phase aims to transfer knowledge and skills to partners. The training is designed based on the Modern Andragogy approach as developed by (Taylor & Kroth, 2009), which emphasizes that adult learning will be more effective if it is based on experience, practical needs, and real problem solving.

Day 1: Theoretical Material

1. Introduction to Content Marketing.
2. Storytelling and branding strategies for vegetable products.

Day 2: Technical Practice

1. Product photography techniques using a cell phone camera.
2. Creating short videos (Instagram Reels/Stories).
3. Simple editing using free applications.
4. Writing promotional and educational captions.
5. Simulation of creating and scheduling content.

Field Support

1. Assistance in producing and uploading content for 1 week.
2. Assistance in optimizing social media accounts (bio, highlights, hashtags, interactions).
3. Implementation of a weekly content calendar.

Evaluation

The evaluation and follow-up stage is used to measure the effectiveness of the program and as a basis for future improvements. This evaluation is carried out formatively and summatively in accordance with the participatory evaluation approach developed by (Chouinard & Cousins, 2021), in which the evaluation process actively involves participants to create a sense of ownership of the changes that occur.

1. Measurement of results in the form of an increase in the number of followers, likes, reach, and engagement rate.
2. Training participant feedback survey.
3. Preparation of reports and follow-up recommendations in the form of establishing a digital MSME community to encourage sustainable collaboration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Community Service activity entitled "Content Marketing Training to Improve Product Competitiveness in the Digital Era for Vegetable Product MSMEs" was carried out according to plan and resulted in significant progress for local MSMEs players. The program lasted for six months and involved the proposing team, village officials, and MSMEs actors, particularly the "Romi Sayur" MSMEs as the main partner. Overall, the activity ran smoothly, was participatory, and had a tangible impact on improving the digital capacity of the participants.

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage began with internal coordination among the proposing team to develop strategic steps for program implementation. The team identified partner needs through direct observation of the Romi Sayur business and interviews with several other MSMEs actors. The observations revealed that most MSMEs players lacked basic knowledge of digital marketing and did not understand the importance of branding for vegetable products. In addition, the use of social media was still very limited, being used only as a communication tool rather than a structured promotional medium.

Based on the mapping results, the team developed a training module containing material on the basic concepts of content marketing, product photography techniques, short video production, writing interesting captions, and content calendar preparation. This stage also involved coordination with village officials to determine the location, schedule, and participants for the activity. Village officials welcomed the program and expressed their full support, given the importance of MSMEs digitalization in the era of modern business competition.

Training Stages

The training was conducted in two main sessions, namely a theory session and a practical session. In the theory session, participants were introduced to the basic concepts of digital marketing and the strategic role of content marketing in building the image and competitiveness of MSMEs. The team of presenters explained how content can influence consumer perceptions, increase brand awareness, and be a determining factor in purchasing decisions. Participants are also given an understanding of changes in consumer behavior in the digital era, where consumers tend to seek product information through visual content, reviews, and interesting stories.

The material on storytelling is an important part because many MSMEs do not yet understand that the story behind a product, from how vegetables are grown, the packaging process, to the uniqueness of the product, can be an added value in promotional content. The explanation is given through examples of other MSMEs content that has successfully utilized this strategy.

On the second day, participants attended a practical session focused on technical skills. Each participant was given the opportunity to practice product photography techniques using a cell phone camera, paying attention to composition, lighting, and the right angle. In addition, participants were also taught how to make short videos using easily accessible applications, such as CapCut and InShot.

Participants were very enthusiastic during this session, as many of them had never tried creating professional visual content before. The team also provided training on how to write attractive and informative promotional captions by combining educational, promotional, and call-to-action elements. The training concluded with a simulation of creating a weekly content calendar to serve as a guide for regular posting.

Field Assistance Phase

Field assistance was provided for a full week to ensure that participants could apply the knowledge they had acquired during the training. At this stage, the team assisted participants in the content production process, from taking photos and videos at their business locations, to editing, to uploading content to social media according to schedule. The main partner, "Romi Sayur," showed very positive progress. During the mentoring, their social media accounts began actively uploading regular content in the form of photos of fresh products, videos of the vegetable sorting process, and customer testimonials. The team also helped optimize the account profile by organizing the bio, selecting relevant highlights, and providing recommendations for appropriate hashtags to increase reach.

In addition, the team provides assistance in building interactions with consumers through direct messages and comments, so that MSMEs social media accounts become not only digital storefronts but also customer service channels.

Program Results and Impact

The implementation of this community service had a tangible impact on participants and the MSMEs environment. Some of the results achieved include:

1. Increased Knowledge and Skills of Participants
   Participants experienced a significant increase in their understanding of digital marketing strategies. They were able to explain the concepts of content marketing, the benefits of storytelling, and strategies for building a strong brand for vegetable products.
2. Improved Technical Skills in Content Creation
   Participants' skills in creating visual content improved, as seen in the much better quality of photos and videos compared to before the training. They were also able to perform simple editing and write attention-grabbing captions.
3. More Structured Social Media Activity
   MSMEs social media accounts have become more active and are managed systematically. Participants have begun to consistently upload content according to a pre-determined content calendar. This has resulted in an increase in the number of followers, content reach, and interaction rates.
4. The Formation of New Habits in Digital Promotion
   Participants have started to adopt new work patterns in digital promotion. They realize the importance of consistency, content quality, and two-way communication with consumers.
5. Strengthening the Competitiveness of MSMEs
   Overall, this program has successfully helped MSMEs increase their competitiveness through the use of social media as an effective promotional tool. MSMEs such as "Romi Sayur" are now known to more consumers, including those outside the village.

The following is a table of community service activity achievements compiled based on the flow of training activities, mentoring, and results as explained earlier.

Table 1. Community Service Activity Achievements

No.	Activity Component	Achievement Indicator	Results Achieved
1	Program Preparation	Completion of needs assessment instruments	MSMES needs survey completed; 4 main issues related to digital marketing identified
2	Module Development	Training modules include theory and practice	Training modules (Content Marketing, product photography, short videos, captions, content calendar) completed and used during training
3	Theory Training	Participants understand basic	90% of participants were able to explain branding and storytelling concepts

		concepts of Content Marketing	
4	Practical Training	Participants can produce digital content	Participants successfully created 5–7 content pieces (photos & videos) during practice sessions
5	Product Photography Practice	Participants can take product photos using proper techniques	Product photo results improved (composition, lighting, and angles enhanced)
6	Video Creation Practice	Participants can produce short promotional videos	Reels/Story videos created by all participants using free applications
7	Content Calendar Preparation	Participants have a weekly content calendar	All participants prepared a full 1-week content calendar with 5–7 posts
8	Field Mentoring	Consistent posting during mentoring period	"Romi Sayur" MSMES posted content consistently according to schedule
9	Social Media Optimization	Social media profile becomes more professional	Bio, highlights, hashtags, and profile appearance optimized
10	Social Media Growth	Increase in followers, reach, and engagement	Followers increased by an average of 35–50% within one month of mentoring
11	Program Evaluation	Participants provide feedback	95% of participants stated the training was very beneficial and requested advanced training
12	Program Outcome	MSMES independence in digital promotion	MSMES able to independently manage social media and routinely produce content

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the Community Service Program with a focus on "Content Marketing Training to Improve Product Competitiveness in the Digital Era for Vegetable Product MSMEs" has been running well and has had a significant impact on MSMEs players, especially the main partner "Romi Sayur". This program has succeeded in increasing participants' knowledge and skills in utilizing digital marketing as a business development strategy. Through a series of activities including preparation, theoretical training, practical training, field mentoring, and evaluation, participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the importance of content marketing, storytelling, social media management, and creating engaging visual content.

In addition to increased knowledge, participants also demonstrated tangible changes in their digital promotion practices, marked by improved photo and video content quality, consistent uploads according to the content calendar, and optimized social media profiles. The increase in the number of followers, content reach, and user interaction during the mentoring period serves as an indicator of the successful implementation of the training. Thus, this community service program has made a positive contribution to enhancing the competitiveness of vegetable SMEs through the effective and sustainable use of digital technology.

In order for the impact of this community service program to continue and expand, several recommendations can be considered for the future. First, advanced training is needed that focuses on more in-depth aspects of digital strategy, such as the use of insights, paid ad management, and social media performance analysis techniques to support data-driven decision making. This advanced training is important so that MSMEs can continue to grow in the face of increasingly dynamic market competition.

Second, a digital MSMEs community needs to be formed as a forum for collaboration, experience sharing, and mutual support in creating joint campaigns or promotional content. This community can also become a long-term mentoring partner for academic institutions in future empowerment programs.

Third, it is hoped that village governments and related institutions can provide facility and policy support to encourage MSME digitalization, such as providing simple mini studio spaces, stable internet access, or regular training related to digital entrepreneurship.

Finally, MSMEs are expected to maintain consistency and creativity in digital content production because the success of digital marketing does not only depend on initial training, but also on the ability to adapt, innovate, and understand consumer preferences over time. With continuous collaboration and optimal use of technology, it has the potential to become an example of MSMEs digital transformation in the region.

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