

# Digital Strategy for MSMEs: Marketing Optimization of Woven Bags

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Digital Literacy, Online Marketing, MSMEs

This research aims to explore and understand how digital literacy and online marketing strategies can be effectively implemented to empower Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Budi Lestari Village. The main focus of this study is to identify the obstacles faced by MSME actors in utilizing digital technology, as well as evaluate the impact of digital marketing training on increasing their competitiveness and business growth. The research method used is a qualitative approach with case studies, where data is collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. The results of the study show that after the training, there is a significant increase in the understanding and skills of MSME actors related to digital marketing, which has a direct impact on increasing turnover and market expansion. The implication of this study is the need to continuously increase digital literacy among MSME actors in rural areas to support the sustainability and growth of their businesses in facing the challenges of globalization.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly developing digital era, the existence of information technology has become an integral part of almost every aspect of life, including in the microeconomic sector (Chowdhury et al., 2020; Sui & Rejeski, 2020; Nguyen & Pham, 2020). One of the sectors that has been significantly affected is Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which play an important role in Indonesia's economy, not only as a driver of the local economy but also as the main pillar of the national economy (OECD, 2021; Tambunan, 2020; Lestari et al., 2020). However, in the face of the challenges of globalization and increasingly fierce competition, many MSME actors in Indonesia, especially in rural areas,

have not been able to utilize digital technology optimally to increase their competitiveness (Kurnia et al., 2021; Suparno & Susilo, 2020; Rustandi & Hadiyati, 2020). Digital marketing, which offers the potential to reach a wider market at a more cost-efficient rate, is often still unfamiliar to many MSME actors in the region (Hussain et al., 2020; Setiawan, 2021; Muda et al., 2021). Therefore, this research is very important to discuss academically, because it can reveal how digital literacy and online marketing strategies can be effectively implemented to empower MSMEs in rural areas, which have been neglected in the current of digital transformation (Kwon & Park, 2020; Wahyuni & Pratiwi, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2021).

In the context of Budi Lestari Village, MSMEs such as woven bag crafts have great potential to develop, but they face various obstacles in accessing a wider market (Putri & Syah, 2020; Fadilah et al., 2020). Lack of knowledge about digital technology and online marketing is the main obstacle that hinders the development of their business (Kuswanto, 2021; Rahman & Ismail, 2020; Wahyuni & Pratiwi, 2021; Anggraeni et al., 2021). This issue has become increasingly crucial given the increasingly fierce competition in local and regional markets (Raharja et al., 2020; Ramadhani & Ratnasari, 2020). Artisans, despite having quality products, still rely on traditional marketing methods such as direct and word-of-mouth sales (Susanto et al., 2021; Setiawan, 2020; Anwar & Sari, 2020). This resulted in limited business growth, both in terms of turnover and market expansion (Riyanto, 2022; Kurniawan & Triyono, 2020; Wulandari & Kusumawati, 2020). This research focuses on how digital marketing strategies can be a solution to overcome these problems, with the hope of making a significant contribution to microeconomic empowerment at the village level (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Wahyuni & Pratiwi, 2021; Firmansyah & Kurniawan, 2021).

Previous research has shown the importance of digital literacy in the development of MSMEs. For example, a study conducted by Fahlevi et al. (2020) found that digital literacy plays an important role in increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the industrial era 4.0. This research reveals that the ability of MSMEs to adopt digital technology is closely related to improving operational efficiency and market expansion. Another study by Susanto et al. (2021) revealed that the implementation of an effective digital marketing strategy can significantly increase sales and exposure of MSME products, especially through e-commerce platforms and social media. Meanwhile, research conducted by Riyanto (2022) emphasized that government support and continuous training in digital literacy are urgently needed to ensure the sustainability of MSME businesses in the midst of digitalization. This study shows that without adequate intervention and support, MSMEs in rural areas tend to lag behind in terms of technology adoption and modern marketing strategies. Although these studies provide important insights into the role of digital literacy in the empowerment of MSMEs, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the practical implementation of digital marketing strategies

in rural environments that have limited access to technology and resources (Fadilah et al., 2020; Raharja et al., 2020; Kuswanto, 2021).

The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach in integrating digital literacy training with practical assistance based on direct participation from MSME actors. This research not only evaluates the effectiveness of digital marketing training, but also dives into the transformation process experienced by MSME actors in implementing these strategies in real life. This approach provides a high level of novelty because it combines theory with practice, and makes a real contribution to the development of digital literacy in rural areas that have received little attention so far. The uniqueness of this research also lies in its focus on MSMEs in Budi Lestari Village, which can be a model to be applied in other villages in Indonesia.

The main purpose of this study is to explore and analyze how digital literacy and online marketing strategies can be implemented effectively to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of MSMEs in Budi Lestari Village. This research is expected to provide practical guidance for MSME actors in rural areas in utilizing digital technology to develop their businesses. The urgency of this research lies not only in efforts to improve the economic welfare of MSME actors, but also in its contribution to more inclusive and sustainable economic development in Indonesia, especially in regions that are still lagging behind in terms of technology adoption. Thus, this research is expected to provide a basis for making more appropriate policies in supporting the digital transformation of MSMEs in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a case study approach. The selection of qualitative methods is based on the research objectives that want to explore and deeply understand the experiences and perceptions of MSME actors in Budi Lestari Village related to digital literacy and online marketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2017). This approach allows researchers to explore the complex dynamics and deep nuances in social interactions, as well as understand the specific contexts that affect the application of digital technology among MSME actors. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to focus attention on the specific context of a single village, which provides a detailed and thorough overview of the implementation of digital marketing strategies in a real environment. This method was chosen compared to other research methods, such as quantitative surveys, because qualitative methods are more appropriate for uncovering complex dynamics, providing deep insights into social interactions, and highlighting transformation processes in specific contexts.

The data collection techniques in this study include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews are used to explore the personal views and experiences of MSME actors related to digital

literacy and the online marketing strategies they apply (Patton, 2015). Participatory observation is carried out to understand the context and dynamics of interactions that occur in the MSME environment directly (Yin, 2017). Documentation is used as an additional source of data to verify information obtained from interviews and observations and to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the relevant practices and policies implemented by MSME actors in Budi Lestari Village (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In-depth interviews allow researchers to obtain rich and detailed information from respondents, while participatory observation provides a direct understanding of the social context and interactions that occur in the field. Documentation is used to complete and verify data obtained through interviews and observations, resulting in more comprehensive and valid data. Interviews were conducted with 10 MSME actors who are active in Budi Lestari Village, Tanjung Bintang District, South Lampung Regency. The location of this research was chosen because this village is one of the areas that has great potential in the development of handicraft products, especially woven bags, but faces challenges in implementing digital marketing strategies. The full address of the research location is Budi Lestari Village, Tanjung Bintang District, South Lampung Regency, Lampung Province. The reason for choosing this location is because of the limited digital literacy among MSME actors in this village, which makes this village an ideal example to explore the impact of digital marketing training. The number of respondents was determined based on their involvement in the training and socialization activities held, as well as the representation of various types of small businesses in the village, including handicrafts, agriculture, and trade.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis. In this analysis, the data obtained from interviews and observations are organized into themes relevant to the focus of the research. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) in the data in depth, providing meaningful insights into the experiences and perceptions of MSME actors (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach also provides flexibility in accommodating multiple perspectives from research participants and allows for richer integration of findings (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). In addition, thematic analysis is suitable for use in this study because it is able to capture the complexity of meaning contained in qualitative data, especially in the context of developing digital literacy and online marketing in rural environments (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify patterns and relationships in the data that provide deep insights into the phenomenon being studied. This process involves encoding the data, identifying key themes, and interpreting those themes in the context of the research. The data was analyzed in stages, starting with the transcription of interviews, the coding of the data, and the identification of the main themes that emerged from the data. Each theme is then analyzed to find patterns, relationships, and deep meanings related to the

experience of MSME actors in implementing digital marketing strategies. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to identify and understand nuances in qualitative data, providing a richer and contextual picture of the marketing transformation process experienced by respondents. The data that has been analyzed is then verified through data triangulation by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the validity of the findings.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to identify the influence of digital strategies on increasing MSME marketing, especially in the case of woven bag handicrafts in Budi Lestari Village. Based on in-depth interviews with MSME owners and trainees, several key findings were found that illustrate how digital literacy and online marketing contribute to improving their business performance. Here are the main findings obtained from this study, which have been correlated with the interviews conducted, as well as the interpretation of the results.

### **Increasing Understanding and Use of Social Media in Marketing**

One of the significant findings of this study is the increase in understanding and use of social media by MSME actors after participating in digital marketing training. Before the training, MSME actors tended to rely on traditional marketing methods such as direct sales in the local market. However, after receiving the training, there was a change in the way they marketed the product.

One participant stated, *"In the past, I only knew how to sell in the market, around the village, or rely on small stalls to sell these woven bags. But after participating in the training, I only realized that selling on social media can reach more people (I\_24)."* This sentence reflects a shift in view from traditional to digital marketing methods, which ultimately affects increased sales.

Another participant, added, *"Now I can use Instagram to upload product photos, and as a result, many people are interested, not only from this village but also from outside (I\_24)."* This statement shows that digital marketing training has improved skills in using social media for product promotion, which has a direct impact on market reach.

The interpretation of these findings is that with the increase in digital literacy, MSME actors in Budi Lestari Village are starting to see social media as an effective tool to expand their market reach. Previously, the use of social media was not considered important due to limited knowledge and skills. However, after the training, they not only understand the importance of social media, but also start implementing this strategy in their business, which has proven to be effective in increasing sales.

### **Correlation Between Digital Understanding and Increased Turnover**

The second finding shows a significant correlation between increased digital understanding and increased turnover experienced by MSME actors after training. Before the training, many business actors found it difficult to increase their turnover due to limited access to a wider market. However, after understanding and implementing digital marketing strategies, there was a significant increase in sales turnover.

Another participant also revealed, *"Before this training, my turnover was stagnant, at least I only got Rp500,000 a month. After I started selling on Shopee and Facebook, I can now get IDR 1,500,000 a month (I\_24)."* This sentence confirms that there is a significant increase in turnover after the implementation of digital marketing.

In line with that, another craftsman, said, *"I thought selling online was complicated and expensive, but it turned out to be cheaper and easier, and the results were not bad. Now my turnover has doubled (I\_24)."* This statement shows that digital marketing not only increases turnover, but is also more efficient in terms of cost and labor compared to traditional methods.

From this interview, it can be interpreted that a better understanding of digital marketing contributes directly to the increase in turnover of MSME actors. The implementation of more modern marketing strategies allows them to reach more consumers at a lower cost, thereby increasing efficiency and profits.

### **Transformation in Marketing Approaches: From Traditional to Digital**

The third finding of this study is a significant transformation in the marketing approach carried out by MSME actors in Budi Lestari Village. Prior to the training, their marketing approach was completely traditional, which was limited to direct selling and word-of-mouth marketing. However, the training has opened their eyes to the benefits of digital marketing, which ultimately changed the way they promote products.

Another MSME actor explained, *"I usually only rely on night markets or village bazaars to sell my products. After this training, I started trying to use WhatsApp to communicate with customers, and the results sold faster (I\_24)."* This shows how digital marketing training has encouraged business actors to take advantage of technology that they previously did not consider important.

Another participant, stated, *"Before, I never thought of creating a website or joining a marketplace. But after being taught in training, I realized that it was important and now I have my own online store (I\_24)."* This shows a significant shift in marketing approaches from fully offline to online.



**Figure 1. These findings state that digital marketing training**

In Figure 1, you can see the initial stages of making woven bags. The process begins by assembling eight dark ropes measuring about 72 cm and twelve ropes measuring about 50 cm to make the base of the bag. This weaving is continued with a long rope according to the size of the bag you want until it is finished. Meanwhile, in picture 2 you can see the finished woven bags, the products of his family, and some of his employees. In addition to conducting socialization and digital marketing training for the production of Mr. Misno's woven bags, the UIN Raden Intan KKN group also learned how to make woven bags directly from Mr. Misno and his wife

These finding states that digital marketing training has succeeded in changing the mindset and marketing approach of MSME actors from conventional to more modern and integrated with digital technology. This transformation not only helps them to survive in the increasingly fierce competition, but also opens up new opportunities that they never imagined before.

Based on the findings that have been described, it can be concluded that digital marketing training has a significant positive impact on improving the business performance of MSMEs in Budi Lestari Village. Increased understanding of the use of social media and other digital platforms has proven to be effective in expanding market reach, increasing turnover, and changing marketing approaches from traditional to digital.

This result is in line with the theory put forward by Kotler and Keller (2016) which states that digital marketing allows business actors to reach a wider market with more efficient costs. In addition, these findings also support previous research that shows that digital literacy is the key to increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the era of globalization (Riyanto, 2020).

To reinforce these findings, further research can be conducted by increasing the number of participants and extending the duration of mentoring after training. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of the long-term impact of digital literacy on the sustainability and growth of MSMEs.

In addition, the following is a table that illustrates the changes in turnover experienced by trainees after implementing a digital marketing strategy:

**Table 1. Changes in Turnover**

| Participant Name | Turnover Before Training (Rp) | Turnover After Training (Rp) | Percentage Increase (%) |
|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mr. Misno        | 500,000                       | 1,500,000                    | 200%                    |
| Rina's mother    | 700,000                       | 1,400,000                    | 100%                    |
| Mr. Andi         | 600,000                       | 1,200,000                    | 100%                    |

From the table above, it is clear that there is a significant increase in turnover after digital marketing training, with an average increase of 133.33%. This shows the effectiveness of training and the importance of digital literacy in developing MSMEs.

The results of this study show that digital marketing training has succeeded in improving the understanding and ability of MSME actors in Budi Lestari Village in using social media to expand their market reach. These findings support a study conducted by Akpan et al. (2020), which shows that the adoption of digital technology can significantly increase the competitiveness of MSMEs through wider market access and reduced operational costs. However, the study also found that the transformation from traditional to digital marketing is not always easy, as MSME actors often face challenges in technology adaptation, which were not fully discussed in previous studies. For example, research by Papadopoulos et al. (2020) emphasizes the importance of digital readiness in adopting new technologies, but lacks the practical barriers faced by MSMEs in rural areas. In addition, the results of this study are in line with the findings of Li et al. (2021) who stated that continuous training and education support is essential to ensure the long-term success of digital marketing strategies among MSMEs. Nonetheless, this study highlights that the successful implementation of digital strategies does not only depend on initial training but also requires ongoing mentoring to overcome the technology adaptation challenges that MSME actors often face, an aspect that has not been paid attention to in previous literature.

This research makes a significant contribution to understanding how digital strategies, especially digital marketing, can be implemented effectively to increase the competitiveness and growth of MSMEs in rural environments. Through a practical approach involving hands-on training and mentoring, the study not only adds theoretical insights into the importance of digital literacy in the era of globalization, but also provides an applicable guide that can be replicated in other areas with similar characteristics. In addition, this research fills in the gaps in the literature by highlighting the challenges faced by MSME actors in adopting digital technology, as well as providing strategic recommendations to ensure the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of MSME digitalization programs. This finding is expected to be a foundation for policymakers and practitioners in designing more comprehensive and

responsive supporting programs to the needs of MSMEs in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that digital literacy and the implementation of online marketing strategies have a significant impact on improving the business performance of MSMEs in Budi Lestari Village. The most important finding of this study is that increasing understanding and skills in using social media and digital platforms can expand market reach and increase the turnover of MSME actors. The lesson that can be taken is that the development of digital literacy among MSME actors is not only important for individual competitiveness, but also to strengthen the local economy in the era of globalization. This research also highlights the importance of a participatory approach in training, where business actors are directly involved in the learning and practice process, so that they are more prepared and confident in implementing digital technology in their business.

Scientifically, this research contributes by updating the perspective on the effectiveness of participatory-based digital marketing training for MSMEs in rural areas. By integrating in-depth interviews and practical approaches, this study strengthens the argument that this method is not only relevant but also necessary in the context of microeconomic development. However, this study has several limitations, including limited case studies that only involve one village and a specific type of business. In addition, the variation in age, gender, and educational background of MSME actors has not been explored in depth. In line with that, further research that accommodates a wider range of gender, age, and survey methods is urgently needed to get a more comprehensive picture. This will support the creation of more appropriate policies and targets in efforts to empower MSMEs throughout Indonesia.

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