

IMPROVING MARKETING SKILLS FOR TRADITIONAL MARKET TRADERS

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Digital Marketing,
Product Innovation,
Traditional Markets

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This research focuses on improving the marketing skills of traditional market traders in facing the challenges of digitalization. The main objective of the research is to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a comprehensive training program that includes the use of digital technology, product structuring innovation, and ongoing support through mentoring. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, which involves data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. A total of 30 traditional market traders were selected as respondents based on certain criteria such as the length of trading, the type of product, and the level of involvement in market activities. Data analysis is carried out through a thematic approach with open, axial, and selective coding to identify relevant key themes. The results of the study show that the training program has successfully improved the understanding and skills of traders in using digital technology for marketing, such as the use of social media and the creation of engaging content. In addition, innovations in product structuring have also been found to increase attractiveness and sales in traditional markets. Ongoing support through mentoring proved to be crucial in helping traders overcome obstacles and increase confidence in adopting new strategies. The implications of this study show that a holistic approach that includes training, product innovation, and mentoring can be an effective strategy to increase the competitiveness of traditional markets in the digital era. This research makes an important contribution to policymakers and practitioners in designing effective development programs for traditional market traders.

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Lale Puspita Kembang, Maryanti, S., & Kalbuadi, A. (2024). Improving Marketing Skills for Traditional Market Traders. *Communautaire: Journal of Community Service*, 3(1), 13-26. <https://doi.org/10.61987/communautaire.v3i1.397>.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets have an important role in the local economy, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia, where they are central to trade and social activities (Aritenang, 2021; Rimmer et al., 2021; Achmad et al., 2022). However, the rapid development of technology and market transformation towards digitalization have posed new challenges for traditional market traders (Matthess & Kunkel, 2020; Malenkov et al., 2021; Song et al., 2022). They are faced with stiff competition with modern markets and e-commerce platforms that offer convenience, product variety, and a different shopping experience (Mofokeng, 2021; Moriuchi & Takahashi, 2023; Akin, 2024). The interest in researching this topic arose from the urgent need to understand how traditional market traders can survive and compete in an increasingly digital trading landscape. This research is important because it provides insight into strategies that traditional traders can adopt to leverage technology as a tool to strengthen their position in the market.

The main problem faced by traditional market traders is limited access and knowledge of digital technologies, which prevents them from adapting to changes in consumer behavior and market trends. Many merchants still rely on conventional sales methods and lack understanding of the importance of digital marketing and innovation in product structuring. This has led to a significant competitive gap between traditional market traders and their more modern competitors. Against this background, this study aims to identify effective strategies to improve the marketing skills of traditional market traders, especially in the use of digital technology.

Previous research has identified several important aspects in the context of traditional markets and digitalization. Neumeyer et al. (2020), in their research found that training focused on digital marketing can improve traders' skills and knowledge in using online platforms, ultimately increasing sales and market reach. Senyo et al. (2023), emphasized the importance of continuous support through mentoring to help merchants overcome barriers in technology adoption and product innovation. Meanwhile, Fraccastoro et al. (2021), point out that despite the awareness of the importance of technology, many traditional traders are still reluctant or unable to make the most of it due to a lack of access and education. However, the study has not specifically examined the impact of a comprehensive and structured training program on improving marketing skills and the use of digital technology by traditional market traders.

Although there are various studies that address the digitalization of markets and the importance of technology in marketing, there are still significant gaps in the literature that examine the direct impact of comprehensive training programs on traditional market traders. Previous research has tended to focus on one aspect of technology or not include supporting elements such as mentoring and mentoring. This research seeks to fill this gap by offering a holistic approach

that includes training, mentoring, and the use of digital technology as a marketing strategy.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach in overcoming the problems faced by traditional market traders. The research not only focuses on digital marketing training, but also covers important aspects such as product structuring innovation and continuous mentoring. This provides a more thorough and in-depth approach compared to previous research. In addition, this research also proposes a training model that can be widely implemented, not only in Indonesia but also in other developing countries that face similar challenges in facing digital transformation.

The main objective of this study is to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a comprehensive training program in improving marketing skills and the use of digital technology by traditional market traders. The urgency of this research lies in the need to provide practical solutions that can help traditional market traders survive and thrive in the digital age. By identifying effective strategies, this research is expected to make a significant contribution in supporting the sustainability of traditional markets, which are an important component of the local economy and community culture. The study also aims to provide recommendations for policymakers and other stakeholders in designing training programs that are more effective and in accordance with the needs of traditional market traders.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study design to explore and understand the marketing dynamics of traditional market traders in the face of digital transformation. This approach was chosen because of its flexible nature and ability to dig into information in depth about complex and contextual phenomena (Priya, 2021; Alam, 2021; Renjith et al., 2021). The case study is considered appropriate in this study because it allows researchers to explore in detail the experiences of individuals and groups in a specific context, namely the traditional market in Indonesia (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This method also provides the flexibility to explore nuances and variables that may be overlooked by a more structural quantitative approach.

The data collection techniques used include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. This research was conducted in Telaga Waru Market, Telaga Waru Village, Labuapi District, West Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. This location was chosen because it is representative in displaying the characteristics of traditional markets in Indonesia which are facing the challenges of digitalization. The respondents in this study were traditional market traders who were active in selling in the market, with a total of 30 traders selected by purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on criteria such as length of trade, type of product sold, and level of involvement in market activities. In-depth interviews are conducted to

explore traders' experiences and perceptions regarding digital technology and the marketing strategies they use. Participatory observation is carried out to directly observe the interaction of merchants with customers as well as the way they manage products and communicate with customers (Rutakumwa et al., 2020; Löhr et al., 2020; Kayesa & Shung-King, 2021).

Data analysis is carried out through a thematic analysis approach, which involves systematically encoding the data and identifying the main themes that emerge from the collected data. The analysis process begins with the transcription of interview and observation data, which is then followed by open coding to identify the initial categories. After that, axial coding is carried out to connect the categories and identify broader themes. Finally, selective coding is used to compose a final narrative that includes all of the main themes and research findings. The validity of the data is guaranteed through triangulation methods, namely by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis. This technique was chosen to provide a comprehensive and in-depth overview of the phenomenon being studied, as well as to ensure that the data obtained is valid and reliable (Dawadi, 2020; Peel, 2020; Naeem et al., 2023). Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding of marketing strategies in traditional markets and their impact on economic sustainability in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to improve the marketing skills of traditional market traders through a comprehensive training program. The results of this study show various improvements in the skills and understanding of traders regarding modern marketing strategies, which have had a positive impact on their sales and competitiveness. Here are the main findings from this study:

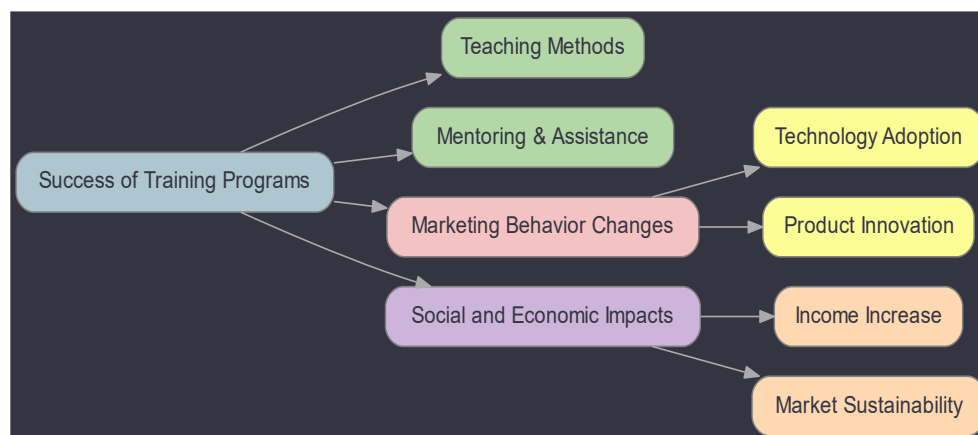


Figure 1. Improve the marketing skills of traditional market traders

Training Program Success

The success of this training program can be measured from various aspects that show an improvement in the skills and understanding of traditional

market traders in implementing modern marketing strategies. The program is designed to provide relevant practical and theoretical guidance, as well as ongoing support through mentoring. The following are some of the key findings that highlight the success of the training program in improving the competence of traders.

Effective Teaching Methods

The implementation of this training program uses teaching methods designed to maximize participants' understanding and skills. The approach used includes a combination of theory and practice, which has proven to be effective in improving the abilities of traditional market traders. One of the key elements of this method is the use of real case studies and simulations, which provide practical context for participants to apply the concepts learned. Additionally, interactive sessions that involve group discussions and hands-on practice help reinforce understanding and encourage active participation. Thus, the teaching methods applied have succeeded in creating a dynamic and relevant learning environment for the needs of traders.



Figure 2. Traditional Market Trader Training Atmosphere

Figure 2. showing the atmosphere of the implementation of training activities, where traders received material and guidance from resource persons. This figure shows the enthusiasm of the participants in participating in the training session, which reflects the effectiveness of the teaching methods used.

One trainee stated, "The teaching methods used really helped me understand marketing concepts that I didn't know before (I_24)."

A trader stated in the interview activities conducted, "I was very helped by the real case examples discussed in the training. This makes it easier for me to apply the theory to my daily practice (I_24)."

The results of the interviews showed that the teaching methods applied in the training program were very effective in improving participants'

understanding of marketing concepts that were previously poorly understood. An approach that combines theory with real-life case examples provides participants with practical experience that makes it easier for them to apply theory to everyday practice. This not only enriches the participants' theoretical knowledge, but also improves the practical skills necessary to manage their businesses more efficiently and competitively. This interpretation emphasizes the importance of learning methods that are applicable and relevant to the field context for the success of the training program.

Mentoring

This training program not only focuses on delivering the material, but also pays special attention to the mentoring and assistance phase after the training. This component is designed to ensure that traders can apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in their daily practice. Each participant is given access to an experienced mentor, who is tasked with providing direct guidance and support. This assistance includes personal consultation sessions, field visits, and regular evaluations to address challenges faced by traders in implementing new strategies.



Figure 3. Atmosphere of Assistance for Traditional Market Traders

Figure 3 shows the atmosphere of mentoring traditional market traders, where participants receive material and guidance directly from mentors. This interactive atmosphere reflects the mentoring methods used to facilitate participants' understanding and skills in modern marketing aspects.

This approach has proven to be very effective in helping traders overcome obstacles and boost their confidence. With ongoing support, merchants can more easily adapt to newly learned marketing strategies, such as the use of social media and attractive product structuring techniques. Mentoring and mentoring provide a strong foundation for traders to grow and innovate, ultimately contributing to their increased competitiveness in the modern market.

One trader said, "After the training, I got direct guidance from a mentor who

helped me apply new marketing strategies. It's very helpful (I_24)."

Another trader stated, "The mentoring provided after the training made me more confident in taking new steps in my business (I_24)."

The results of the interview above show that the mentoring and mentoring component in the training program has a significant impact on the implementation of new marketing strategies by traders. Direct guidance from mentors helps participants to better understand and implement the knowledge gained during the training into daily business practices. In addition, the ongoing support provided through post-training mentoring provides a confidence boost for traders to try new approaches in their business. This shows that mentoring and mentoring are key elements that not only support knowledge transfer but also facilitate successful practical implementation, as well as drive innovation and adaptation in business operations.

Changes in Marketing Behavior

This training program has succeeded in significantly changing the marketing behavior of traditional market traders, especially in the adoption of technology and product structuring innovation. These changes reflect the ability of traders to adapt to the development of modern markets and information technology, which is a direct result of the training they receive.

Technology Adoption

The adoption of technology is one of the significant changes that have occurred among traditional market traders after participating in this training program. Prior to the training, many traders were still reluctant or even unfamiliar with using digital technology to support their marketing activities. However, after gaining an understanding of the benefits and techniques of using social media and other digital platforms, there has been a substantial change in their approach to technology.

One trader commented, "I used to never use social media for promotions, but now I'm active on Instagram and Facebook (I_24)."

Another merchant said, "I learned a lot about how to create engaging content on social media, and this really increased my (I_24) subscriber count."

The results of these interviews indicate that the training has succeeded in encouraging the adoption of digital technology, especially social media, as a promotional tool among traditional market traders. Previously, most merchants did not utilize digital platforms for marketing, but after the training, they started actively using social media such as Instagram and Facebook. This use of social media not only increases the visibility of their products but also attracts more customers. In addition, the training provides skills in creating engaging content, which has proven to be effective in increasing the number of customers. This

shows that the adoption of digital technology has become an important tool for merchants in expanding market reach and increasing interaction with consumers.

Innovation in Product Structuring

The training provided also focuses on the importance of attractive product arrangement as a strategy to increase appeal and sales in traditional markets. Innovation in product arrangement is one of the main aspects developed in this program, considering that visual appearance is a crucial factor in attracting customer interest. Good product arrangement not only improves the aesthetics of the kiosk, but also makes it easier for customers to find the items they are looking for, as well as creating a more enjoyable shopping experience.



Figure 3. Traditional Market Trader Training Atmosphere

Figure 3. Demonstrate product styling simulation activities, where traders learn and practice new techniques in organizing their products. This activity aims to improve merchants' ability to attract customers' attention through effective visual merchandising.

One trader said, "After the training, I started to style the products more attractively and regularly. Customers seem to be more interested and often ask about my (I_24) products."

Another merchant added, "I use more interesting product styling techniques such as product placement with striking colors and good lighting. It really helps increase (I_24) sales."

This interview revealed that the training has successfully introduced traders to more attractive and strategic product structuring techniques. Merchants report that after the training, they begin to implement a more orderly and aesthetic product styling, which captures the attention of customers and encourages further interaction. The use of striking colors and good lighting as visual elements has also proven to be effective in highlighting products and

creating attractive displays. This innovation in product styling not only improves the presentation of the store but also contributes significantly to the increase in sales. These findings show that the visual aspect of merchandising has an important role in attracting customer interest and improving business performance.

Social and Economic Impact

The training programs conducted not only have an impact on improving the skills of individual traders, but also produce far-reaching positive effects in a social and economic context. This impact reflects a significant shift in traditional market dynamics, which benefits both traders and the local community as a whole.

Increased Revenue

One of the main indicators of the success of this training program is its impact on the income of traditional market traders. Through improved marketing skills and innovation in product structuring, merchants can attract more customers and increase their sales volume. This increase in revenue not only reflects the effectiveness of the training program, but also contributes positively to the economic well-being of traders and local communities.

One trader said, "After taking the training, my sales increased by about 25%. It really helped increase my (I_24)'s income."

Another trader stated, "I feel more confident in running a business after the training, and this is reflected in the increase in daily sales (I_24)."

The interviews indicate that the training program had a positive impact on the traders' business outcomes, particularly in terms of increased sales and confidence. The first trader observed a significant 25% increase in sales after applying the newly acquired marketing strategies, highlighting the program's effectiveness in enhancing their income. The second trader mentioned an improvement in daily sales, attributing it to the confidence gained from the training. This suggests that the training not only equipped the traders with practical skills but also boosted their self-assurance, leading to more proactive and effective business management. These outcomes underscore the tangible benefits of the training in enhancing both economic performance and entrepreneurial confidence among traditional market traders.

Sustainability of Traditional Markets

In addition to the direct economic impact, this training program also makes an important contribution to the sustainability of traditional markets. This sustainability is seen in the ability of traders to compete with the modern market and maintain their relevance amid changing consumer preferences and technological developments. With increased skills and understanding of modern

marketing strategies, traders are able to adopt new practices that support the long-term sustainability of traditional markets.

One trader commented, "With the new skills I learned, I feel better able to compete with the modern market (I_24)."

Another trader said, "We are now more organized and able to attract more customers, which helps keep our market alive (I_24)."

The results of this interview show that the training program has a positive impact on increasing the income of traders. One of the merchants reported an increase in sales of about 25% after taking the training, which directly contributed to the increase in their revenue. This shows that the new knowledge and skills acquired during the training are successfully implemented effectively in daily business practices. In addition, the training also increases the confidence of traders in running their business. This increase in confidence is reflected in better business performance, including an increase in daily sales. These findings underscore the importance of continuous and relevant training in supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as strengthening economic sustainability at the local level.

Table 1. Description of the training program for traditional market traders

Aspects	Description	Impact
Teaching Methods	Combination of theory and practice, real and simulated case studies, group discussions and hands-on practice	Improved understanding and skills of traders
Mentoring & Pendampingan	Direct mentorship from mentors, post-training mentoring, ongoing support	Increased confidence and innovation in business
Technology Adoption	Use of social media, creation of engaging content, increased interaction with consumers	Wider market penetration and higher engagement
Product Innovation	The arrangement of the product is more orderly, the use of striking colors, good lighting	Increased product appeal and sales
Increased Revenue	Increased sales volume, increased economic well-being	Traders' income increases significantly
Market Sustainability	Ability to compete with the modern market, relevance in the midst of change	Continuity of traditional markets in competition with modern markets

The results of this study show that the comprehensive training program is able to significantly improve the marketing skills and understanding of traditional market traders, especially in the adoption of technology and product structuring innovation. These findings are in line with research conducted by Lányi et al. (2021), which found that digital technology-based training can strengthen the competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses by improving technical knowledge and digital marketing capabilities.

However, these findings are slightly different from the results of Rahman et al., (2020), research, which show that technology adoption among traditional merchants is still limited to the use of simple communication tools and has not fully integrated social media as the main marketing tool. In addition, the study revealed that continuous mentoring and mentoring have a positive impact on increasing confidence and innovation in business, which supports the findings of a study by Bag et al. (2020), which emphasizes the importance of continuous support in improving operational efficiency and product innovation. However, there was a difference in the scale of the economic impact produced, where the study recorded a 25% increase in income, while previous studies were more conservative in estimating the increase in income due to training. This disparity may be due to differences in market context and direct involvement of mentors in the programs held, which is not necessarily found in other studies. Thus, the results of this study enrich the existing literature by highlighting the importance of a holistic approach in training that includes technology, product structuring, and sustainable support to achieve economic sustainability in traditional markets.

This research makes a significant contribution in the field of marketing and development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially in the traditional market sector. Through the implementation of a comprehensive training program, this research successfully identifies and addresses the challenges faced by traditional market traders in facing competition with modern markets and technological developments. The main contribution of this research lies in the development of a holistic approach that includes digital marketing training, innovation in product structuring, and ongoing support through mentoring. This not only improves traders' skills and understanding of modern marketing strategies, but also provides empirical evidence of the importance of integrating technology in business operations to improve competitiveness. In addition, the study provides new insights into the economic impact of training programs, which are not only limited to increasing income but also include aspects of sustainability in traditional markets. Thus, this study provides practical guidance for policymakers, training institutions, and other relevant parties in designing effective development programs for traditional market traders in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed several important findings that provide new insights into how to improve the marketing skills of traditional market traders. The most important finding of the study is that a comprehensive training program can significantly improve traders' understanding and ability to use digital technologies and modern marketing strategies. The lesson that can be drawn from this research is the importance of a holistic approach that not only focuses on improving technical knowledge, but also strengthens ongoing

support through mentoring and mentoring. This approach has been proven to be able to increase traders' confidence and encourage innovation in their business operations. In addition, the study shows that the adoption of technology, while still limited to some traders, can improve the competitiveness and sustainability of traditional markets.

The strength of this research lies in the scientific contribution provided, especially in updating the perspective on the role of technology in supporting SMEs in the traditional market sector. This research successfully shows that the integration of technology and innovation in product structuring can have a positive impact not only on increasing revenue but also on the attractiveness of traditional markets in the midst of competition with modern markets. However, the study also had limitations, including limited coverage in certain locations and a lack of variation in terms of gender and age of participants. In addition, the methods used are still limited to observation and interviews, which may not cover all relevant variables. Therefore, more comprehensive follow-up research is needed involving various genders, ages, and survey methods to get a more holistic picture. This follow-up research is expected to provide a stronger basis for more targeted and effective policymaking in supporting the sustainability of traditional markets in the digital era.

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