

IMPROVING DIGITAL MARKETING PROFICIENCY FOR MSMEs VIA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF ISLAMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP BOARDING SCHOOL PURWAKARTA

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Abstract

This community engagement program was implemented to enhance the digital marketing skills of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) managed by the Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School Purwakarta, Global Cahaya Nubuwwah Insani (GCNI). Considering the increasing role of social media as a cost-efficient and wide-reaching marketing channel, the program provided contextual training tailored to the needs of GCNI's coffee shop business unit. The activities included comprehensive needs assessment, situational analysis, and interactive workshops focusing on social media optimization, digital branding, and practical content creation. Evaluation results indicated strong benefits, with 84.38% of participants rating the program as highly useful and 15.63% as moderately useful. A key contribution of this initiative was its ability to integrate digital marketing strategies with institutional identity and local cultural branding, thereby strengthening both business visibility and community relevance. Despite these achievements, challenges were observed in terms of varying levels of digital literacy among participants and the limited duration of the program, which restricted opportunities for long-term skill reinforcement. To improve future outcomes, blended learning approaches and collaborations with digital practitioners are recommended to provide sustained mentoring and broader impact. Overall, this program demonstrates how community engagement can effectively empower institutionally managed MSMEs by embedding digital marketing capabilities into their entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Community Engagement, Educational Entrepreneurship, Coffee Shop Business, MSMEs.

Abstrak

Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini dirancang untuk memperkuat kapasitas pemasaran digital pelaku Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) yang dikelola oleh *Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School* Purwakarta, Global Cahaya Nubuwwah Insani (GCNI). Menyadari semakin pentingnya media sosial sebagai sarana promosi yang hemat biaya dan jangkauan luas, program ini difokuskan pada pelatihan kontekstual yang relevan dengan unit usaha kedai kopi GCNI. Kegiatan dilaksanakan melalui identifikasi kebutuhan, analisis situasi, serta lokakarya tatap muka yang menitikberatkan pada optimalisasi media sosial, strategi digital *branding*, dan pembuatan konten praktis. Hasil pelaksanaan menunjukkan manfaat yang signifikan: 84,38% peserta menilai program ini sangat bermanfaat, sementara 15,63% menganggapnya cukup bermanfaat, yang menandakan kesesuaian materi dengan kebutuhan mitra. Kontribusi khas dari program ini adalah keberhasilannya mengintegrasikan strategi digital dengan identitas institusi dan *branding* lokal, sehingga tidak hanya meningkatkan visibilitas bisnis tetapi juga memperkuat relevansi komunitas. Namun, tantangan yang muncul meliputi beragamnya tingkat literasi digital peserta serta keterbatasan waktu kegiatan yang mengurangi kesempatan penguatan keterampilan jangka panjang. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya penerapan model pembelajaran campuran serta perluasan kolaborasi dengan praktisi digital maupun mitra akademik untuk menjamin keberlanjutan dampak. Secara keseluruhan, program ini menunjukkan bahwa pengabdian masyarakat dapat menjadi mekanisme efektif untuk memberdayakan

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UMKM berbasis institusi melalui internalisasi kompetensi pemasaran digital ke dalam ekosistem kewirausahaan.

Kata kunci: Pemasaran Media Sosial, Keterlibatan Komunitas, Pendidikan Kewirausahaan, Bisnis Kedai Kopi, UMKM.

Introduction

Social media has become an essential channel for various purposes, ranging from personal identity to business activities. For micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia, optimizing the use of social media is crucial, as these platforms offer cost-effective, wide-reaching, and efficient means of promoting and marketing products. With the increasing internet penetration and rapid growth of social media users in Indonesia, these platforms serve as strategic tools to enhance brand awareness, reach geographically dispersed markets, and interact with consumers in real time. Furthermore, social media enables MSMEs to tailor marketing content creatively according to audience preferences, increase customer engagement, and obtain feedback to support product innovation.

In such a dynamic and highly competitive market, especially during the era of digital transformation, social media mastery becomes a key factor in maintaining business competitiveness and sustainability. Previous studies have emphasized that when used strategically, social media can significantly improve marketing performance, brand image, customer engagement, and financial outcomes for MSMEs (Kumar & Nanda, 2023; Rodríguez Gutiérrez et al., 2023). However, MSMEs often face challenges such as lack of skills, limited resources, and difficulties in measuring return on investment. Addressing issues such as customer support, platform trust, and perceived value is therefore essential (Singh, 2024). Effective customer relationship management through social media mediates its positive impact on marketing performance, especially when trust-building and data utilization are prioritized (Gao et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2024).

In this context, academic institutions—particularly lecturers and students—play a strategic role in increasing the capabilities of MSME actors by providing theoretical insights and practical guidance, especially in digital marketing. Universities can transform marketing knowledge into workshops, training, and community service programs tailored to MSMEs. Students can also contribute through internships or university-community programs (e.g., Kuliah Kerja Nyata or Kampus Merdeka projects) by assisting MSMEs in developing content, managing social media accounts, and implementing targeted promotional strategies. This academic-MSME synergy not only strengthens the competitiveness of MSMEs but also serves as a contextual learning medium for applying theoretical knowledge in real-world settings.

This initiative focused on a community partner: Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School Purwakarta, Global Cahaya Nubuwwah Insani (GCNI), which manages not only a boarding school but also a guesthouse and a coffee shop. The institution faces multiple challenges, including increasing student enrolment, boosting accommodation occupancy, and improving the visibility and sales of its coffee shop. These issues are compounded by limited understanding of social media as a promotional tool. Hence, this program was designed to improve the partner's capacity to use social media more effectively in promoting their diverse business offerings. Although several community engagement programs have supported MSMEs, most have focused on individual MSME actors, not institutionally affiliated business units like those in educational institutions (Table 1). This underlines the relevance and novelty of the current program, which targets MSMEs embedded within a formal school environment—highlighting a more integrative approach that combines education, business, and digital empowerment.

Table 1. Academic Contributions to Improving Understanding of Social Media Optimization for MSMEs through Community Service Activities.

Author(s)	Contribution	Partner types	Area
Nurmansyah et al. (2023)	Assisting MSMEs in sustaining their viability within the prevailing pandemic circumstances.	Food MSMEs	Cisomang Village, Cikalong Wetan District, West Bandung Regency
Novita Sari et al. (2025)	Enhancing public comprehension and proficiency in digital marketing and social media promotion.	MSMEs in the food and handicrafts sector	Olak Kemang, Jambi City Bay Lake.
Akib (2022)	Imparting expertise on skills and the utilization of social media as a marketing instrument for MSMEs	Coffee MSMEs	Jakarta
Putri et al. (2023)	Implementing outreach initiatives to promote the utilization of social media as a marketing platform for village MSME products, aiming to enhance the visibility and competitiveness of local offerings.	Tofu and Tempeh Chips MSMEs	Suka Damai Village, Kuala District, Langkat Regency
Khaidarmansyah & Firdayanti (2023)	To assist Chio Snack MSMEs in optimizing social media utilization to enhance sales of Chio Snack Lumer Chips.	Chio Snack Lumer Chips MSMEs	Trimulyo Village, Pesawaran Regency, Lampung.
Prasetyo et al. (2024)	Enhanced awareness of the significance of employing digital marketing on social media platforms.	MSMEs with various products	Cingebul Village, Lumbir District
Meliyanti & Magdalena (2023)	Enhancing MSME marketing proficiency, augmenting the efficacy of social media utilization, and fostering consumer engagement.	Coffee MSMEs	Gunung Sari Village, Way Khilau District, Pesawaran
Palem et al. (2025)	Enhancing the comprehension of MSME stakeholders on the utilization of social media for marketing local products.	Food MSMEs	Wuakerong Village, Nagawutung District, Lembata Regency

Christian et al. (2023)	Enhanced partner comprehension of social marketing through digital media.	Flower MSMEs	Rawa Belong Flower Market, Kemanggisan, West Jakarta
Yulita et al. (2023)	Enhancing partners' understanding and expertise in digital marketing for food service enterprises.	Food MSMEs	Kemis Market Tangerang

Methods

This community engagement initiative was carried out in two main stages (Figure 1): the preparation stage and the implementation stage. During the preparation stage, the implementation team conducted a needs assessment and situational analysis of the partner institution, the Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School Purwakarta (GCNI), located in Kampung Tegalsapi, Neglasari, Darangdan District, Purwakarta Regency, West Java. A site survey was conducted to observe the actual conditions of the businesses managed by GCNI, which include a guesthouse and a coffee shop.

1. Preparation phase

During the preparation stage, the implementation team conducted a needs assessment and situational analysis of the partner institution, the Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School Purwakarta (GCNI), located in Kampung Tegalsapi, Neglasari, Darangdan District, Purwakarta Regency, West Java. A site survey was conducted to observe the actual conditions of the businesses managed by GCNI, which include a coffee shop. Based on these observations, the implementation team held an internal discussion to identify the core problems and determine the most appropriate engagement method. It was agreed that the activity would involve face-to-face workshops and counseling tailored to the specific context and needs of the institution.

2. Implementation phase

The implementation stage took place on December 7–8, 2024, and focused on enhancing participants' understanding and skills in utilizing social media platforms as tools for business promotion and marketing. The training included materials on platform introduction, digital branding strategies, visual content development, and practical sessions on managing business social media accounts. At the end of the program, participants were asked to provide feedback through a structured questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and offer suggestions for future improvements.

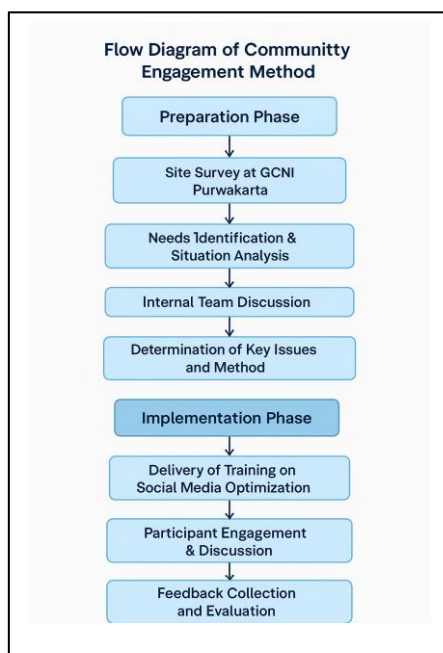


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the implementation of community service activities

Results and Discussion

The event was attended by 32 participants, all of them are MSMEs affiliated with the Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School Purwakarta, GCNI. The implementation team documented the social media ownership (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok) of the participants, as illustrated in Figure 2. The implementation team noted that one member possessed many social media accounts. In the contemporary day, this is quite feasible and commonplace. This is due to the distinct characteristics, user demographics, and functionalities of each platform, which can enhance marketing efforts. Certain social media platforms thrive in product visualization via images and brief films, whilst others are more adept at fostering communities and engaging adult consumers. Simultaneously, certain social media sites are highly effective for engaging the younger demographic through innovative, viral content, and others serve as channels for direct communication and customer support. The statistics indicates that Instagram is the most utilized social media platform, succeeded by TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook.

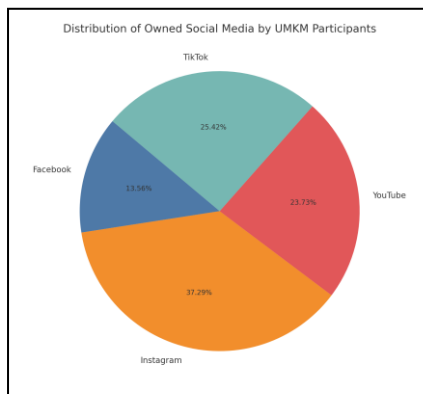


Figure 2. Distribution of social media owned by participants

Discussion

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), such as coffee shops, should optimize the use of social media, as it offers a cost-effective, efficient, and wide-reaching platform to engage with customers, build brand awareness, and strengthen personal interactions. The visually-driven nature of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook is particularly effective in showcasing the aesthetics of coffee products, shop interiors, and ambiance—factors that strongly appeal to Millennials and Gen Z. Social media also enables businesses to respond directly to customer inquiries, complaints, or reviews, which, in turn, enhances satisfaction and fosters loyalty. Social media marketing activities significantly contribute to building trust and loyalty, which are crucial for encouraging repeat visits and sustaining long-term customer relationships (Ibrahim et al., 2021). In fact, effective use of social media has been shown to be a stronger predictor of return intention than trust or loyalty alone. Features such as stories, live streaming, and user-generated content allow coffee shops to craft authentic brand experiences and develop engaged customer communities. Furthermore, social media enables MSMEs to leverage analytics tools to measure campaign performance in real-time and fine-tune marketing strategies accordingly. Adoption of social media is also influenced by technological readiness, organizational capabilities, and external pressures such as market trends and customer expectations (Eze et al., 2021). Understanding market dynamics, in this case, becomes a vital asset for the success and sustainability of coffee shop businesses (Pangguna et al., 2024; Santoso & Christian, 2021). Strategic use of social media allows MSMEs to stand out in a competitive marketplace and reach broader audiences at relatively low cost (Eze et al., 2021). Thus, social media is a critical tool in building trust, nurturing loyalty, and driving sustainable growth for MSME coffee shops.

The implementation of this program ran smoothly and effectively. Several photo documentations of the material presentation are shown in Figure 3. Among the numerous benefits of social media for supporting the success of coffee shop businesses, five key advantages were emphasized by the implementation team:

1. *Enhancing Brand Awareness*

Social media serves as a powerful tool for MSMEs like coffee shops to build and maintain a strong and consistent brand identity in the minds of consumers. Through visual content such as beverage photos, shop ambiance, and customer testimonials, coffee shops can effectively communicate their uniqueness to a wide digital audience. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are ideal for creating a compelling first impression, directly contributing to increased brand recognition. Consistency in visual elements, color palettes, tone of voice, and the use of relevant hashtags reinforces brand recall. Moreover, the algorithmic nature of these platforms supports the viral spread of content, allowing brand awareness to grow rapidly even with limited promotional budgets. Targeted social media marketing activities also play a pivotal role in establishing trust, fostering customer loyalty, and encouraging repeat visits (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Brand communities developed through social media help customers connect not only with the brand but also with fellow consumers, strengthening brand identification and emotional attachment (Lee & Hsieh, 2022; Santos et al., 2022; Wong, 2021). Additionally, coffee shops can use social media to express both local and global cultural identities, making their brands more distinctive and appealing to target audiences (Hazaia & Qassem, 2025). With consistent brand messaging and active customer interaction, social media helps cultivate loyal communities, reinforce brand identity, and support long-term business sustainability.

2. Increasing Sales

Social media has evolved from being a promotional tool to a direct sales channel with tangible impacts on business performance, especially for MSMEs like coffee shops. Features such as Instagram Shopping, WhatsApp Business catalogs, and marketplace links enable customers to complete purchases quickly and conveniently. This strategy is further reinforced through promotional content such as limited-time discounts, menu bundles, and giveaways, which create urgency and drive purchase decisions. Real-time interactions—such as responding to customer inquiries—accelerate the conversion process and improve customer satisfaction. Engaging and timely posts have been shown to directly increase sales, particularly for new products (Yost et al., 2021). Social platforms now offer integrated shopping tools, including live shopping and in-app purchases, which allow customers to transact without leaving the platform (Bawack et al., 2023; Ge et al., 2021). Furthermore, the use of short videos and influencer partnerships significantly boosts sales, particularly when the content is lively, creative, and interactive (Ge et al., 2021; Shen et al., 2024). Social media is strategically utilized at various stages of the sales process—from initial contact to purchase closure—due to its immediacy, accessibility, and responsiveness (Itani et al., 2022; Weber & Haseki, 2021). In many cases, the effectiveness of social media surpasses that of traditional advertising in driving purchase behavior (Lin et al., 2021; Narayanaswamy & Heiens, 2021). By integrating commerce features, leveraging influencer power, and encouraging active engagement, coffee shops can convert social interactions into measurable sales and business growth.

3. Improving Customer Service

Social media provides a vital two-way communication channel for MSMEs like coffee shops, enabling them to respond promptly and efficiently to customer inquiries, complaints, and feedback. With features such as chat, comments, and direct messages, coffee shops can deliver real-time, personalized customer service while demonstrating responsiveness and attentiveness to customer needs. Dialogic communication strengthens business–customer relationships, builds trust, and enhances brand loyalty (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Oncioiu et al., 2021). Timely responses to concerns can significantly boost customer satisfaction and mitigate the spread of negative reviews, thereby contributing to a more positive brand image (Kumar & Nanda, 2023; Oncioiu et al., 2021). Moreover, direct feedback gathered through social media can be used to refine products, improve service quality, and enhance the overall customer experience. Active engagement and prompt responses also reinforce brand trust and increase the likelihood of repeat visits (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Oncioiu et al., 2021). Thus, for MSME coffee shops, social media is more than just a marketing tool—it is a dynamic platform for real-time, two-way communication that boosts satisfaction, nurtures loyalty, and supports long-term business success.

4. Building a Customer Community

Social media offers strategic opportunities for MSMEs like coffee shops to build and sustain a loyal community around their brand. Through interactive features such as Instagram Story, Live sessions, Facebook Groups, and TikTok comments, businesses can foster dialogue and promote active customer participation. These communities serve as platforms for sharing updates, exclusive content, and valuable consumer insights. Brand communities on social media play a critical role in deepening customer identification with

the brand and encouraging positive behaviors such as advocacy and organic information sharing (Lee & Hsieh, 2022). Ongoing interactions within these communities strengthen emotional bonds, improve customer retention, and stimulate word-of-mouth promotion. Additionally, social media enables MSMEs to build strong local social networks through collaborations with stakeholders and neighbourhood groups, which expand social ties and foster a sense of belonging (Koletsi et al., 2021). By encouraging collaboration and idea exchange, MSMEs can co-create solutions that enhance business resilience (Yu et al., 2021). Therefore, social media functions not only as a promotional medium but also as a platform for empowerment—allowing coffee shops to build dynamic local communities, strengthen customer loyalty, and establish enduring relationships.

5. *Enhancing Marketing Strategy Effectiveness*

The ability of social media to tailor content to specific audience segments makes it a highly measurable, targeted, and efficient marketing tool compared to traditional methods. Coffee shops can design campaigns based on user demographics, locations, interests, and behaviors, thereby delivering messages that are more relevant and impactful. Social platforms allow marketers to identify and precisely target audience groups, significantly improving campaign effectiveness (Çetinkaya et al., 2024; Lang et al., 2023; Nichifor et al., 2021). Paid advertising features also provide flexibility for businesses to reach the most promising potential customers while keeping marketing costs manageable. Tools such as text analysis and user profiling enable the creation of customized landing pages and advertisements that address the unique needs of each segment, enhancing engagement and conversion rates (Çetinkaya et al., 2024; Nichifor et al., 2021). Social media campaigns can be continuously monitored and assessed using metrics such as engagement rate, click-through rate, reach, and conversion, allowing for data-driven real-time optimization (Jami Pour et al., 2021; Nichifor et al., 2021). Additionally, brands can adjust content to align with cultural identities and local preferences across segments, thereby improving targeting precision and community engagement (Villegas & Marin, 2021). In sum, the precision targeting and ease of performance evaluation make social media a highly effective, efficient, and accountable channel for driving sustainable business growth in the coffee shop sector.



Figure 3. Delivery of Material

Subsequently, following the completion of the presentation and Q&A session, the organizing team conducted a feedback assessment to evaluate participants' responses to the program. In general, the results of this feedback are illustrated in Figure 4. Specifically, the feedback collected from the community engagement activity delivered by the implementation team to MSME actors at the Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School Purwakarta (GCNI) demonstrated a highly positive response. A significant majority of participants—84.38%—indicated that the program was highly beneficial, while 15.63% considered it moderately beneficial, and none of the participants perceived the activity as unhelpful. These findings reflect that the content and delivery methods were well-aligned with the needs of the participants, particularly in enhancing their understanding and skills related to social media utilization for promoting and marketing their pesantren-based business products.

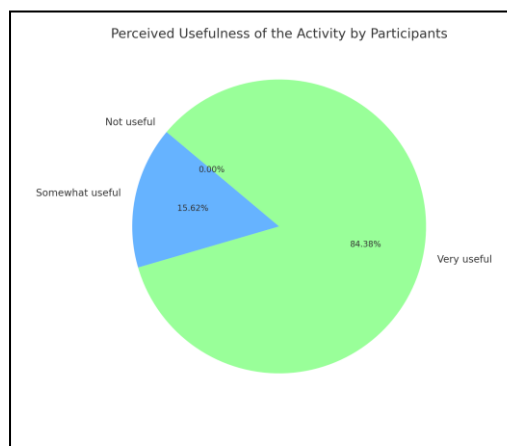


Figure 4. Participant Feedback Results
Conclusion

This community service initiative, targeting MSMEs under the management of Islamic Entrepreneurship Boarding School Purwakarta (GCNI), successfully enhanced participants' understanding of social media utilization in business promotion and marketing. The face-to-face approach allowed for contextual learning aligned with the institutional and religious values of the partner organization. A key highlight of this program, which differentiates it from similar initiatives, is its integration of lifestyle branding strategies, especially through platforms like Instagram and TikTok. This not only increased visibility but also created meaningful engagement with younger audiences. The post-activity feedback showed remarkable outcomes—84.38% of participants found the activity very useful, and the remaining 15.63% considered it somewhat useful. This indicates that the program met the practical needs of the participants. However, limitations were also noted. The variation in digital literacy levels among participants and the short duration of the engagement posed challenges in ensuring long-term impact and skills retention. Moving forward, it is recommended that similar programs adopt a blended model that includes post-training digital mentoring or follow-up workshops. Collaborations with digital practitioners or social media influencers may also enhance knowledge retention and broaden impact. Future programs should further explore partnerships with institutionally governed MSMEs to scale up the integration of digital tools within organizational ecosystems, fostering sustainable digital transformation in education-linked entrepreneurship contexts.

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