

From traditional to digital: Strengthening MSME marketing through online marketplace training in Salatiga

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Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in local economic growth, yet many still struggle to market their products online because of limited digital literacy, lack of business training, and unfamiliarity with marketplace platforms. This community service program aimed to strengthen the digital marketing capacity of MSMEs in Salatiga through online marketplace training and mentoring. The participants were 18 MSMEs assisted by LazisMu Salatiga that had not yet used online marketplaces for product marketing. Using a Participatory Action Research approach, the program was implemented through problem identification, training, simulation, marketplace account creation, mentoring, and evaluation. The training introduced online business concepts, marketplace features, digital promotion practices, and strategies to expand market reach. The results showed improvements in digital literacy, digital marketing practices, online sales performance, marketplace utilization, and business competitiveness, with an average increase of 30.2% across five indicators. These findings indicate that marketplace training can support MSMEs' transition from traditional to digital marketing.

Keywords: Business Training, Marketplace, MSMEs, Online Business, Training Marketing

Abstrak

Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) memiliki peran penting dalam pertumbuhan ekonomi lokal, namun masih banyak pelaku UMKM yang mengalami kesulitan dalam memasarkan produk secara daring karena keterbatasan literasi digital, kurangnya pelatihan bisnis, dan belum familier dengan platform marketplace. Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat kapasitas pemasaran digital UMKM di Salatiga melalui pelatihan dan pendampingan penggunaan marketplace. Peserta kegiatan adalah 18 UMKM binaan LazisMu Salatiga yang belum menggunakan marketplace untuk memasarkan produk. Dengan pendekatan Participatory Action Research, kegiatan ini dilaksanakan melalui identifikasi masalah, pelatihan, simulasi, pembuatan akun marketplace, pendampingan, dan evaluasi. Materi pelatihan mencakup konsep bisnis daring, fitur marketplace, praktik promosi digital, dan strategi perluasan jangkauan pasar. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan literasi digital, praktik pemasaran digital, kinerja penjualan daring, pemanfaatan marketplace, dan daya saing usaha, dengan rata-rata peningkatan sebesar 30,2% pada lima indikator. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan marketplace dapat mendukung transisi UMKM dari pemasaran tradisional menuju pemasaran digital.

Kata kunci: Pelatihan Bisnis, Pasar Online, UMKM, Bisnis Online, Pelatihan Pemasaran

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1. Introduction

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 era has brought great influences and changes to various aspects of life, including production systems and business models, which allow organizations or companies to improve their position through various resources (Elhazmiri et al., 2022). The Industrial Revolution 4.0 is characterized by the use of advanced internet-based technology that shortens the chain so that economic activities become more effective and efficient (DiRusso et al., 2011). OECD (2008) explains that developments in information and communications technology (ICT) have become a crucial part of modern economic transformation, including in e-commerce activities and business digitalization. Digitalization in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is crucial because it offers numerous benefits for business development. In Indonesia, the government has encouraged this digitalization process by implementing digital payment (e-payment) and electronic commerce (e-commerce) services in the MSME supply chain (Kilay et al., 2022)

The use of digital technology enables more effective, efficient, and integrated business processes, thereby supporting increased competitiveness for businesses, including MSMEs, in the digital economy era. In the era of the digital economy, digital transformation has become a new approach for businesses to gain a competitive advantage in the context of dynamic and intense market competition (Zhang et al., 2022). New technologies in an ecosystem can quickly automate a business (Hooker & Kim, 2019). One of the fastest-growing business trends today is online business through a marketplace.

Online marketing has become a crucial strategy in the modern business world because it offers companies virtually unlimited opportunities to reach new customers while retaining existing ones. The rapid growth of internet users has made online marketplaces and marketing a primary need for businesses to remain competitive in the digital age (Schwarzl & Grabowska, 2015). Advances in technology and mobile devices have led to more and more consumers choosing to shop online, resulting in a boom in retail sales that has increased dramatically in recent decades. This trend is projected to continue to increase in the coming year (Lim & Hu, 2020). Marketplace is a medium for trading goods and services through the internet, so that it can overcome the problem of distance and time (Loro & Mangiaracina, 2022; DiRusso et al., 2011).

Presence marketplace causes changes in people's spending behavior from transactions offline becoming online (Albattat, 2020) Marketplace is an important player in the internet economy because it can provide many benefits and improve business performance (Lim & Hu, 2020; Loro & Mangiaracina, 2022). The penetration of internet users in Indonesia until January 2022 is 73.7% of the Indonesian population, making it a potential market for business development online that must be taken advantage of by business owners. Marketplace explains that online marketplaces can increase market reach and product demand because consumers can more easily compare various products on a single digital platform. This presents an opportunity for

MSMEs to expand their marketing efforts, improve sales efficiency, and strengthen their competitiveness through optimal marketplace utilization (Tian et al., 2018).

Indonesia is a country with a large number of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) and is the backbone of the country's economy. Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs) in 2019 showed that the number of MSMEs in Indonesia was as many as 65.47 million units, which means that this number reaches more than 99% of the total businesses in Indonesia. Until 2021, the number of MSMEs that had only digital boarding was only 13.5%. One of the obstacles is the low MSMEs marketing their products online is the lack of knowledge, digital literacy level, and business training online obtained by MSMEs (Febriantoro, 2018; Islami et al., 2020). Many MSME business owners have not marketed their products in a sustainable manner online through a marketplace.

In line with the government's policy targeting 30 million MSMEs to go digital by 2024, at least 6 million MSMEs will be needed to transform digital Annually. Therefore, training or business marketing training online, it is necessary for MSME business owners to be able to adapt to business trends through their involvement in the digital ecosystem so that they are competitive and increase the scale of their business and sales.

Salatiga, as one of the cities in Central Java, has a fairly good development of MSMEs. Based on data from the Salatiga City Cooperatives and SMEs Office, the number of MSMEs in Salatiga City is 23,491 units. Until 2022, MSMEs in Salatiga will experience a growth of 50%. Service through business training online is done by Wijayanti et al. (2021) In MSMEs in Bali, business training online through the marketplace Shopee has given trainees the initiative to register their brands and increase their sales. Research Obeidat (2021) shows that online marketing increases profits and revenue.

In order to increase the understanding of MSME business owners, especially MSMEs in Salatiga City, towards marketing online, the author aims to hold a training on business marketing online marketplace, which is in the form of assistance in making and managing the marketplace. Training was held in collaboration between the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, UIN Salatiga, and MSMEs in Salatiga City.

Some of the problems faced by MSEs in Salatiga City are does not have good marketing and minimal utilization online marketing in MSMEs in Salatiga City, lack of socialization to MSMEs in the city of Salatiga about online business marketing, low understanding of MSME actors in the city of Salatiga online business marketing through marketplace the lack of community service activities as a form of implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education in the Sharia Economics Study Program of FEBI UIN Salatiga and the absence of the role of the Sharia Economics Study Program of FEBI UIN Salatiga in conducting online business marketing training in the city of Salatiga. Santoso et al. (2022) showed that one of the main factors inhibiting MSMEs from adopting online marketplaces is the perceived complexity of using digital technology. Many MSMEs find it difficult to understand the registration

process, use online marketplace features, and manage their online stores, leading to perceived risk and resistance to digital transformation. Therefore, improving digital literacy and mentoring online marketplace users are crucial steps to help MSMEs adapt to digital business developments.

Previously, experimental studies were conducted to determine the effectiveness of the training that will be done. Based on the results of interim interviews with several MSME business owners in Salatiga City, it shows that there are still many MSMEs that have not marketed their products through marketing online. This community service is important to provide training in digital business marketing in the marketplace so that it can improve the performance of MSMEs in the city of Salatiga. The number of MSMEs fostered by LazisMu Salatiga is 30 MSMEs, with 18 MSMEs that will be mentored. This community service is carried out by providing online business marketing training Marketplace for MSME actors in Salatiga City, especially LazisMu, fostered by Salatiga City, so this community service activity is entitled "PESONA: Training Online Marketplace Business Marketing for MSMEs in Salatiga City".

2. Method

The service method used in the activity uses a training method approach. Training methods are methods that focus on the effectiveness of delivery strategies during training in order for people to achieve certain abilities, to help achieve the purpose of the organization (Elizar & Tanjung, 2018). The types of training methods used in this service are discussions, exercises/practices, simulations, and lectures (Asir & Rahmi, 2021). This community service activity includes Participatory Action Research (PAR).

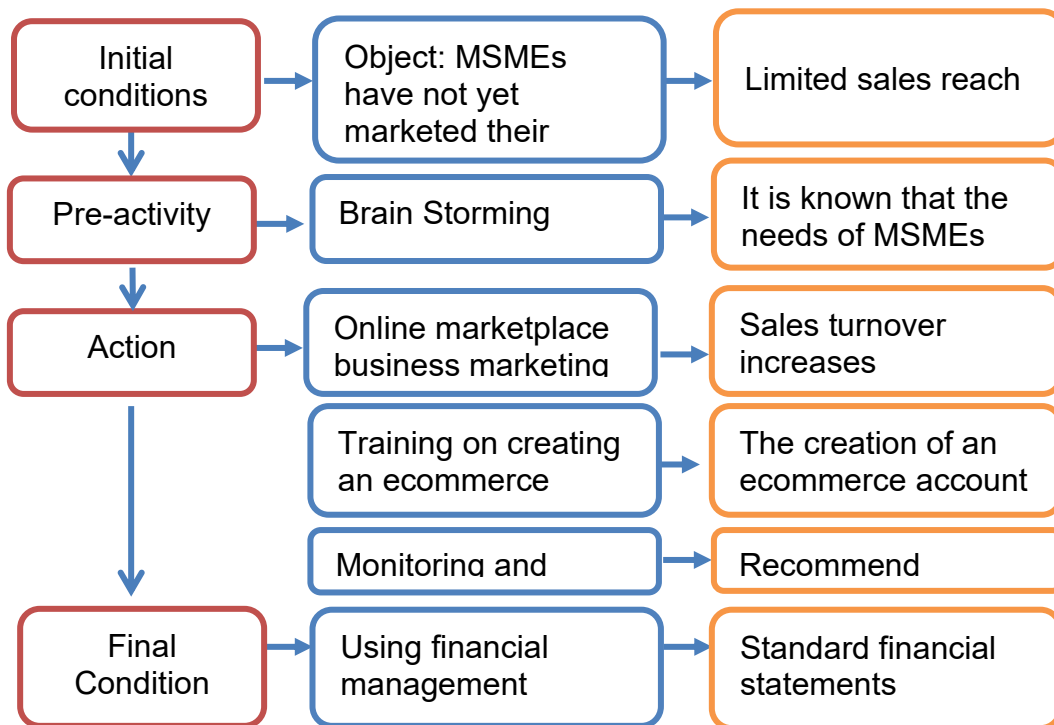


Figure 1. Framework for Implementing the MSME Assistance Program

The training participants in this community service activity were 18 MSMEs under the guidance of LazisMu Salatiga. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: small businesses that have not yet marketed their products online through marketplaces. Increased digital literacy, improved digital marketing practices, and increased sales will measure the success of this activity. This measurement is relevant to the marketplace concept proposed by Kawa and Wałęsiak (2019) where the success of using a marketplace can be seen from the ability of business actors to expand market reach, increase marketing effectiveness, and increase interaction with consumers through digital platforms. The framework of the community service activity is presented in Figure 1.

Initial Conditions

The initial conditions that occurred for MSME actors in the city of Salatiga were as follows:

Table 1. Projected Changes in Conditions Before and After the Mentoring Program

Elements	Before	After
Understanding online business	Knowledge and understanding of online business is still low	Increased knowledge and understanding of online business
Types of online businesses	Not knowing the type of online business	Have different types of online businesses
Knowledge of the Marketplace	Not understanding the marketplace	Understand different marketplaces
Marketing reach	Limited marketing reach	Marketing reach is increasing more widely
Sales turnover	Low turnover	Turnover up
Business efficiency	Inefficient yet	More efficient

Pre-activity

Brainstorming in order to see the real problems that occur in MSMEs, as well as find the most possible and adequate alternatives. Knowing the needs of MSMEs will make it easier to carry out treatment.

Action

Chakravarthy et al. (2022) explain that the use of marketplaces and electronic marketing channels can increase market growth and facilitate online transactions for consumers. Therefore, marketplace account creation training is crucial for MSMEs to understand the operational mechanisms of digital platforms and utilize them as an effective marketing strategy. There are several actions or things to be done, all based on training. The first step is to deliver material on the importance of increasing product sales turnover through digital business. From this training, MSMEs can realize the importance of expanding the marketing reach of their products.

The next training is on creating a simulated marketplace account for its use. From this training, MSME actors are expected to have an account in the marketplace, understand the features provided, and understand how it works. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation, whether it can run well or not, and to find out the existing

obstacles. Monitoring and evaluation activities will produce recommendations for both MSMEs and stakeholders.

Final Condition

MSMEs that receive training or are already trained can already have an account in the marketplace and can operate it properly to market their products so that they have a wide sales reach. In the end, the demand for MSME products will be more and the profits will be higher.

3. Results

Implementation of Service

Online Business Marketing Training through Marketplace (Marketplace Account Creation). The marketing training was themed "PESONA: Online Marketplace Business Marketing Training for MSMEs in the city of Salatiga". This activity aims to provide knowledge and skills to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in utilizing e-commerce platforms as an effective marketing tool. This event was guided by a speaker who is experienced in the field of online marketing, namely Nafila Chairunnisa, S.E., a practitioner in online buying and selling.



Figure 1. Implementation of Online Business Marketing Training

The activity started at 13.00 WIB with the introduction of the concept of online marketing and marketplace. Participants are invited to understand the importance of selling online in today's digital era. The speaker explained the benefits of having a marketplace account, including reaching a wider market and increasing sales. Furthermore, practical steps in creating a marketplace account were conveyed.

The training activities went successfully, and the participants were very enthusiastic about following it to completion. The most dominant obstacle is that MSME actors are not familiar with the marketplace and do not use technology well.

Implementation of Service

In the early stages, participants in this online business marketing training were introduced to various kinds of online marketing media that are developing well today. The introduction was also continued with the presentation of marketplaces in Indonesia



that can be used by MSME actors in marketing products, so that it will expand the marketing reach and reduce operational costs.

Table 2. Improvement in Digital Literacy and Marketing Performance of MSMEs After the Community Service Program

Indicators	Before the Community Service Program	After the Community Service Program	Improvement (%)
Digital Literacy	Participants had a limited understanding of digital technology, online marketplaces, and digital business operations	Participants demonstrated better understanding and ability to use digital platforms and marketplace features	32%
Digital Marketing Practices	MSMEs rarely used online marketing channels and had minimal experience in promoting products digitally	MSMEs actively utilized marketplaces and applied digital marketing strategies to promote products online	35%
Online Sales Performance	Sales were still dependent on offline transactions with limited market reach and low sales turnover	MSMEs experienced wider market reach, increased customer engagement, and higher sales turnover through online platforms	28%
Marketplace Utilization	Most participants did not have marketplace accounts and were unfamiliar with marketplace operations	Participants successfully created and managed marketplace accounts for product marketing	29%
Business Competitiveness	MSMEs had low competitiveness due to limited digital adaptation	MSMEs became more adaptive and competitive in the digital business environment	27%

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the “PESONA: Online Marketplace Business Marketing Training for MSMEs in Salatiga City” program demonstrated that digital marketing training and mentoring can significantly improve the capabilities of MSME actors in utilizing online marketplaces. Before the program, many participants had limited knowledge of digital business, lacked confidence in using online marketing platforms, and had minimal understanding of marketplace features. Through training, simulations, and mentoring activities, participants gained better digital literacy, improved understanding of online business strategies, and enhanced ability to operate marketplace platforms effectively.

Furthermore, the program contributed to improvements in digital marketing practices, wider product marketing reach, and increased sales performance among

participating MSMEs. The training activities also increased participants' confidence and motivation to transform their businesses from conventional to digital-based marketing systems. Therefore, continuous mentoring and follow-up training are recommended to ensure the sustainability of digital transformation among MSMEs and to strengthen their competitiveness in the digital economy era.

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