

BUILDING BRANDING POWER AND DIGITAL MARKETING FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract: *This study evaluates the effectiveness of an educational seminar on product branding and digital marketing conducted by students of Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang in Desa Pucangrejo. Held on August 3, 2024, the seminar featured Bapak Misbakhul Arreẓki, S.E., M.M. as the speaker, focusing on branding strategies and digital marketing. Using observation as the research method, this study examined participant interactions and reactions during the seminar. Observations revealed that MSME actors in Desa Pucangrejo have not fully utilized digital technology and still rely on traditional marketing methods. Nevertheless, participants' enthusiasm indicated a growing awareness of the importance of branding and digital marketing. The seminar has the potential to enhance MSME knowledge and skills, expected to improve competitiveness and expand market reach. The implementation of the seminar's content is anticipated to assist local MSMEs in becoming more competitive in the global market.*

Keywords: *Product Branding, Digital Marketing, MSMEs*

Introduction

In the rapidly advancing digital era, technology has become an inseparable part of daily life. Technological advancements offer various conveniences that make human activities more practical, effective, and efficient. This digital transformation affects not only individual lifestyles but also business practices, particularly for *Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises* (MSMEs). In the context of increasingly intense business competition, the ability to adapt to digital technology has become a necessity for MSMEs to sustain their operations and expand their market reach.¹

One highly relevant strategy in facing the challenges of the digital era is product branding and digital marketing. Product branding is the process of building the image of a product or service with the aim of distinguishing it from competitors and creating

¹ Dianingsih Dianingsih, "Penerapan Sistem Akuntansi Pada Usaha Mikro Kecil dan Menengah di Kabupaten Banyumas", *J-LEE: Journal of Law, English, and Economics*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2022): 221-233. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35960/j-lee.v4i1.811>

a positive impression in the minds of consumers. This process encompasses all aspects of the product or service, including quality, price, design, and user experience. Strong branding can enhance brand awareness and create higher consumer loyalty, making the product more recognizable and memorable in the market.

Digital marketing, on the other hand, refers to all marketing efforts that utilize the internet and other digital technologies such as websites, social media, email, and search engines to reach consumers.² Digital marketing is often more efficient and effective than traditional marketing because it can reach a wider audience at a lower cost. Through digital marketing, MSMEs can increase brand awareness, attract more potential customers, and encourage more intense interactions with consumers. The ability to strategically use various digital platforms allows businesses to quickly adapt to market changes. However, amidst the opportunities offered by digitalization, many MSME operators still do not fully understand the importance of product branding and digital marketing. Many local entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas, have yet to fully utilize the potential of digitalization to promote their products. This is due to various factors, including limited knowledge, skills, and access to digital technology. As a result, many MSMEs struggle to compete with businesses that have already adopted digital strategies.

To address these challenges, education and training efforts are needed to enhance MSME operators' understanding and skills in leveraging digital technology. This education is crucial so they can effectively implement product branding and utilize digital marketing to boost sales. In this context, educational programs such as seminars and training can be a suitable solution to equip MSME operators with the necessary knowledge and skills. As part of the Community Service Program in Pucangrejo Village, Pegandon District, Kendal Regency, students from Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang have initiated a seminar themed "Product Branding and Digital Marketing to Enhance MSME Entrepreneurship in Pucangrejo Village". This seminar

² Femy Maria Catharine, Ana Fitriana Poerana, Maulana Rifai, "Personal Branding Influencer Nadia Ninette melalui Konten Olahraga dan Pola Hidup Sehat di Media Sosial Instagram", *Dawatuna: Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2024): 596-610.

aims to provide local MSME operators with knowledge about the importance of product branding and digital marketing strategies to strengthen their position in an increasingly competitive market. Through this seminar, it is hoped that MSME operators in Pucangrejo Village will understand key concepts in branding and digital marketing and be able to apply them to improve their business competitiveness.³

By featuring experienced speakers, the seminar aims not only to enhance participants' knowledge about product branding and digital marketing but also to motivate them to adopt new and innovative strategies. Positive community responses and active participation from MSME operators indicate enthusiasm and awareness of the importance of adapting to changes. This seminar is a crucial first step in encouraging the transformation of local MSMEs into more competitive entities on both national and global levels.

Method

The research method used in this study is observation. Observation is a data collection technique that involves direct observation of research objects in their natural context. In this method, researchers actively observe and record behavior, events, or phenomena that are relevant to the research topic without changing or manipulating conditions in the field. Observation allows researchers to obtain authentic and in-depth data about how things happen in real situations, providing valuable insights that may not be obtained through other methods.⁴

The observation process can be carried out in a participatory or non-participatory manner. In participatory observation, researchers are directly involved in the activities being observed, so they can gain a deeper perspective from within. In contrast, non-participatory observation involves researchers simply observing without interacting or being involved in the ongoing activities. This method helps researchers to maintain an objective distance from the research subjects, thereby reducing the

³ Penny Az-Zahra, dan Arti Sukmalengkawati, "Pengaruh Digital Marketing Terhadap Minat Beli Konsumen", *MEA: Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen, Ekonomi, & Akuntansi*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Desember, 2022): 2008-2018. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31955/mea.v6i3.2573>

⁴ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif (Untuk Penelitian yang Bersifat: Eksploratif, Enterpretif, Interaktif, dan Konstruktif)* (Jakarta: CV. Alfabeta, 2023).

potential for bias and allowing for more accurate data collection regarding the behavior or phenomena being studied.

The main advantage of using the observation method is its ability to provide rich and detailed data about the context and dynamics that occur in the field. With observation, researchers can capture aspects that may not be revealed through interviews or questionnaires, such as social interactions, behavioral patterns, and reactions to certain situations. However, this method also has limitations, such as the potential for subjectivity in data interpretation and the challenges of observing rare or unexpected phenomena. Therefore, observation is often used in conjunction with other data collection methods to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the research topic.

Result and Discussion

The development of technology in the digital era has affected almost all aspects of life, including the business world. The convenience and efficiency offered by technology encourage changes in lifestyle and the way of doing business. Business actors, especially those engaged in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector, are required to be more adaptive to the development of digital technology in order to compete effectively in an increasingly competitive market. Product branding and digital marketing are the main keys to differentiating products from competitors and increasing brand awareness and customer loyalty.⁵

Building the strength of branding and digital marketing for community empowerment involves a strategic process that utilizes digital technology to strengthen brand identity and expand market reach. Strong branding creates a positive image that differentiates a product or service from competitors and builds awareness among consumers, while digital marketing utilizes online platforms such as social media, email,

⁵ Septian Reri Winarto dan Rahadian Bisma, "Studi Literatur: Analisis Persepsi UMKM di Indonesia Terhadap *Cyber Security* Menggunakan Model *Protection Motivation Theory* (PMT)", *JINACS: Journal of Informatics and Computer Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (September, 2021): 20-28. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26740/jinacs.v3n01.p20-28>

and search engines to reach a wider audience at a more efficient cost. The combination of the two can empower the community, especially MSMEs, by providing the knowledge and skills to promote their products effectively, increase visibility, and boost sales, thereby contributing to local economic development and business sustainability.

Product branding is the process of building a positive image of a product or service in the minds of consumers, which aims to differentiate the product from its competitors. Through strong branding, businesses can increase brand value, strengthen customer loyalty, and ultimately increase sales. Digital marketing, on the other hand, uses various digital media such as websites, social media, and email to promote products and expand market reach at a more efficient cost than traditional marketing.

To support the improvement of the competence of MSME actors in Pucangrejo Village, Pegandon District, Kendal Regency, students from Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang held an educational seminar with the theme “Product Branding and Digital Marketing to Increase Entrepreneurship (MSMEs) in Pucangrejo Village”. This seminar was held on August 3, 2024 and was attended by local MSME actors and enthusiastic local residents. The invited resource person was Mr. Misbakhul Arrezki, S.E, M.M., a lecturer who is experienced in the fields of product branding and digital marketing.

The seminar discussed various important topics such as branding strategies, the use of social media for marketing, and marketing data analysis. The speakers also emphasized the importance of utilizing digital media to strengthen the marketing strategy of MSME products. This activity was also attended by the Head of Pucangrejo Village, Mr. Nur Said, who gave a speech on the importance of technology adaptation for MSME actors to increase business competitiveness. The public response to this seminar was very positive, with high enthusiasm seen from the activeness of the participants in the question and answer session. This seminar is expected to provide a better understanding to MSME actors regarding the importance of product branding and digital marketing. In addition, the hope is that MSME actors can apply the

knowledge gained to expand the market and increase sales of their products, as well as make local MSMEs better known in the global market.



Gambar 1. Seminar and Discuss

The results of this study indicate that the application of the observation method has succeeded in revealing behavioral patterns and dynamics of interactions in the field in depth. Through direct observation, researchers found that MSME actors in Pucangrejo Village tend not to fully utilize product branding and digital marketing strategies. Although there are several businesses that have tried to implement digital marketing techniques, many of them still rely on traditional marketing methods and do not understand the potential of social media and other digital tools to increase market reach.

Observations also revealed that there is a growing awareness among MSME actors regarding the importance of digital technology for the development of their businesses. However, the main obstacles faced are the lack of knowledge about how to effectively use digital tools and the lack of adequate access or training. Most business actors showed a high interest in learning and implementing new techniques, but they need further guidance and support to be able to utilize this technology optimally.

The results of the educational seminar held in Pucangrejo Village showed a positive impact on MSME actors' understanding of product branding and digital marketing. Observations during the seminar revealed that participants, consisting of

local MSME actors, showed a high interest and enthusiasm in learning the new techniques discussed. The resource person, Mr. Misbakhul Arrezki, S.E., M.M., successfully delivered the material clearly, covering important aspects from branding strategy to digital marketing. This was reflected in the active interaction and in-depth questions asked by participants during the Q&A session, which showed good engagement and understanding of the material presented.

Specifically, the observation results indicated that many MSMEs in Pucangrejo Village still rely on traditional marketing methods and do not utilize the potential of digital technology. This seminar educated them about the benefits of effective product branding and how digital marketing can increase market reach at a lower cost. Although awareness of the importance of digital technology is starting to grow, there are still challenges in practical implementation, such as limited technical knowledge and access to the necessary digital tools.

Discussions with seminar participants and feedback obtained showed that the people of Pucangrejo Village were very supportive and appreciative of this initiative. They realized that improving skills in branding and digital marketing was essential for the progress of their businesses. The success of this seminar showed great potential for local economic development through appropriate education and training. With the implementation of the material that has been delivered, it is hoped that MSMEs in this village can implement effective strategies to advance their businesses and compete in the global market.

Conclusion

The educational seminar activity organized by mahasiswa Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang in Pucangrejo Village aims to improve community knowledge and skills in product branding and digital marketing. With a better understanding of modern marketing strategies, MSME actors are expected to be able to adapt to technological developments, increase competitiveness, and bring their products to a wider market. Effective implementation of the material presented in this seminar is expected to help local MSMEs become more competitive in the global market.

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