

Digital branding assistance for MSMEs as a marketing strategy in the Industry 4.0 Era

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Abstract

Purpose: This program aimed to assist MSMEs "Solali" restaurant in developing creative and innovative branding strategies through digital technology to strengthen competitiveness in the Industry 4.0 era.

Method: Activities were conducted through participatory mentoring, including needs assessment, training on digital branding concepts, and hands-on workshops for creating and applying digital marketing content, especially via social media.

Practical Applications: The program provided "Solali" restaurant with actionable digital branding strategies to improve brand awareness, engage customers, and expand market reach, enabling a transition from traditional to modern marketing.

Conclusion: The mentoring enhanced participants' skills and understanding of digital branding, resulting in increased online visibility and a stronger brand image. These outcomes are expected to support sales growth and business sustainability.



Introduction

Industry 4.0 has transformed nearly all sectors of the economy, including micro small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), by integrating advanced digital technologies, big data, and automation into business processes (Saputra & Soleh, 2022; Daud et al., 2022). This paradigm shift compels MSMEs to enhance their global competitiveness through digital transformation. In the culinary sector, the rapid growth of information technology has reshaped marketing strategies, requiring businesses to adopt innovative approaches to meet increasingly digital-centric consumer behavior (Sulistianingsih et al., 2024; Ohara et al., 2024).

Branding plays a crucial role in differentiating products, strengthening consumer recognition, and influencing purchasing decisions (Shams et al., 2024). Effective branding strategies can boost sales performance, build customer loyalty, and create a sustainable competitive advantage (Featherman et al., 2021; Gupta, 2022; Desveaud et al., 2024; Shams et al., 2024; Troiville et al., 2024). For MSMEs, branding is not only a communication tool but also an essential component in creating a unique identity and value proposition (Andari et al., 2024). Digital branding through social media has proven to be an effective solution to expand market reach and improve engagement with target customers (Rialti & Zollo, 2021; Zollo et al., 2021; Ago et al., 2023; Shandy, 2023).

However, many MSMEs face challenges in adopting digital branding strategies due to limited knowledge, skills, and financial resources (Sifwah et al., 2024; Petropoulou et al., 2024). These barriers hinder their ability to compete with larger businesses in the digital marketplace. Such challenges are also faced by MSMEs "Solali" restaurant, a traditional culinary business located along the main Pantura route in Probolinggo, East Java. "Solali" is a Soto Lamongan restaurant owned by Lilis, with best-selling menu items including Soto Ayam Kampung (free-range chicken soup) and Soto Babat (beef tripe soup). The restaurant has yet to utilize digital branding or delivery applications such as GoFood, resulting in limited brand visibility and customer reach.

To address these issues, this community service program was designed to mentor "Solali" restaurant in developing creative and innovative digital branding strategies. The program focused on redesigning its visual identity, activating social media and delivery platform accounts, and creating engaging promotional content. By leveraging digital tools, the initiative aims to strengthen the restaurant's competitiveness, improve brand recognition, and contribute to long-term business growth in the Industry 4.0 era.

Method

The community service program adopted a participatory mentoring approach that emphasized collaboration between the Nurul Jadid University service team and the partner business, MSMEs "Solali" restaurant. This approach aimed to empower the partner by involving them actively in every stage of the process. The program was carefully structured into six stages to ensure systematic implementation and measurable outcomes. Each stage was designed to address specific challenges and build sustainable digital marketing capabilities for the partner.

The first stage focused on Needs Assessment and Situation Analysis, where initial observations and interviews were conducted with the restaurant owner and employees. This step identified key challenges related to branding, packaging, and digital marketing readiness, as highlighted by Musa (2022). The findings were compiled into a baseline report that outlined the partner's current practices and areas requiring improvement. This report served as a foundation for designing targeted interventions in the subsequent stages.

The second stage involved Digital Marketing Training, which introduced the partner to essential concepts of digital branding and marketing. Training sessions covered the use of social media platforms such as TikTok for promotional activities and GoFood as a delivery channel. To measure the effectiveness of the training, pre-test and post-test evaluations were conducted, demonstrating significant improvements in the participants' knowledge and

understanding of digital marketing strategies.

Following the training, the third and fourth stages focused on Account Creation and Optimization and Content Development and Mentoring. Business accounts on TikTok and GoFood were created and optimized to enhance the restaurant's online presence. The team also worked on improving the visual identity by designing a new logo and packaging stickers. Hands-on mentoring sessions guided the partner in producing engaging promotional materials, including product photography, short videos, and persuasive copywriting for digital campaigns.

The final stages emphasized Implementation, Evaluation, and Sustainability. The partner published the developed content on TikTok and GoFood, and engagement metrics such as followers, views, and customer interactions were monitored to assess performance improvements. Continuous mentoring ensured that the partner could independently manage its digital branding strategy. Feedback sessions were conducted to refine strategies and encourage consistent content production, thereby promoting long-term sustainability and growth for the MSME.

Figure 1. Stages of Implementation of the Proposed Service Program



Source: Author's Work, 2025.

Result

The implementation of the community service program resulted in several tangible outcomes that significantly strengthened the digital branding capacity of Rumah Makan "Solali." These achievements were the result of a structured mentoring process that combined training, account activation, and content development. Each outcome contributed to improving the restaurant's visibility and competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

Figure 2. Logo Used as Identity on Soto Packaging



Source: Private Documentation, 2025.

The first major outcome was the design of a new logo and improvement of product packaging. A professionally designed logo was created and applied to packaging in the form of stickers, giving the restaurant a distinctive and recognizable visual identity. This step was crucial for brand differentiation, as emphasized by Rahma et al. (2023) and Zed et al. (2024). The redesigned packaging not only enhanced product attractiveness but also helped establish a stronger brand image, which is essential for building customer trust and loyalty.

The second outcome involved the activation of social media and delivery accounts, particularly on TikTok. The community service team assisted in creating and activating a

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TikTok business account for Rumah Makan “Solali.” This initiative aimed to leverage social media as a powerful promotional tool. The team provided guidance on developing digital promotional content, including product videos and photos, and supported efforts to increase followers. Additionally, the partner began learning how to conduct live streaming sessions to promote products and interact directly with consumers, which is a key feature of TikTok’s marketing ecosystem.

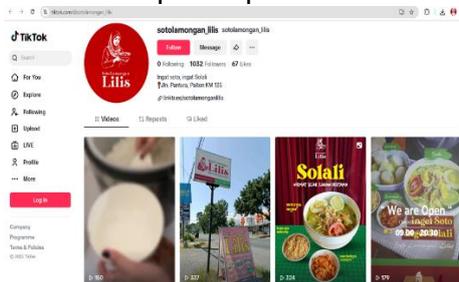
Figure 3. Mentoring session with the owner of Rumah Makan “Solali” for TikTok account activation



Source: Private Documentation, 2025.

TikTok has become one of the most relevant platforms for digital marketing, offering features such as Branded Hashtag Challenges, TikTok Shop, and Live Streaming (Arnetta & Haryono, 2025). According to Saulu et al. (2025), the use of TikTok for MSMEs has shown significant results in increasing followers and engagement. This trend was evident in Rumah Makan “Solali,” where engagement metrics improved after the activation of the account and publication of content, indicating the effectiveness of the adopted digital strategies.

Figure 4. TikTok account profile photo of Rumah Makan “Solali”

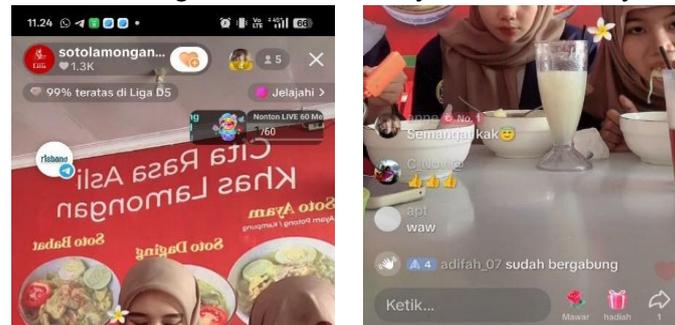


Source: Private Documentation, 2025.

The third outcome was digital content creation and publication, which addressed the limitations of conventional marketing methods. The team assisted in creating and activating a GoFood account, enabling the restaurant to offer online food delivery services. This step expanded market access and provided greater convenience for customers to place orders. As noted by Rimadiaz et al. (2024), digital branding strategies on social media platforms can significantly improve the performance of culinary businesses. Similarly, Riswati et al. (2024) highlight that outreach and training enhance MSMEs’ ability to utilize platforms like TikTok and GoFood effectively.

The fourth outcome was an increase in digital literacy and customer interaction. Post-program evaluations revealed that the partner had developed the ability to manage social media accounts and create engaging content independently. TikTok followers and engagement rates increased, reflecting higher customer interest and interaction. This finding aligns with Saulu et al. (2025), who demonstrated that training and active use of TikTok can strengthen brand awareness and boost MSME product sales. Moreover, the success of the partner in managing digital campaigns underscores the importance of experiential learning and mentoring, as emphasized by Sifwah et al. (2024).

Figure 5. Live streaming trial conducted by the Community Service Team

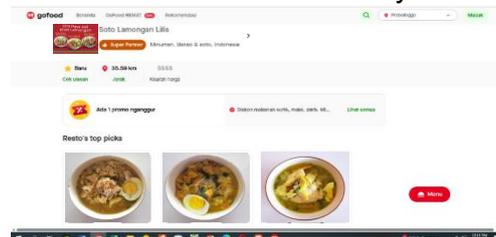


Source: Private Documentation, 2025.

Another significant achievement was the development of independence in digital branding management. The partner's ability to update content and handle campaigns without external assistance indicates that the mentoring approach was effective in fostering self-reliance. This outcome is critical for sustainability, as it ensures that the partner can continue implementing digital strategies beyond the program's duration. The combination of training and mentoring proved to be a practical approach for building long-term digital capabilities among MSMEs.

Finally, the program achieved its target indicators, with 85–100% success in account activation, content publication, and digital interaction. These results demonstrate that the structured mentoring process effectively built foundational skills in digital branding and marketing. Overall, the program highlights the potential of participatory mentoring to empower MSMEs, enabling them to adopt digital tools that enhance brand visibility, customer engagement, and market competitiveness.

Figure 6. Profile of the GoFood delivery service account



Source: Private Documentation, 2025.

Discussion

The results of this community service program underscore the critical role of digital branding in improving the competitiveness of MSMEs in the culinary sector. One of the most notable achievements was the introduction of a new logo and enhanced packaging design, which successfully established a consistent and professional visual identity for Rumah Makan "Solali." This outcome aligns with previous studies indicating that a well-designed logo and coherent brand identity can strengthen consumer perception, increase product attractiveness, and ultimately drive sales performance (Rahma et al., 2023; Ainun et al., 2023; Arshad et al., 2023). By creating a strong visual identity, the restaurant was able to differentiate itself in a competitive market.

Another significant result was the activation of TikTok and GoFood business accounts, which substantially improved the restaurant's online presence. These platforms enabled broader market access, facilitated more frequent customer interactions, and simplified purchasing processes. The increase in followers and engagement metrics observed during the program provides empirical evidence that social media activation can lead to greater brand visibility and customer awareness. This finding is consistent with Saulu et al. (2025), who reported that TikTok is an effective platform for promoting local culinary businesses and

enhancing engagement. The use of GoFood further complemented this strategy by offering convenience and expanding the customer base through digital delivery services.

The program's participatory mentoring approach played a pivotal role in achieving these outcomes. By integrating training, practical content creation, and continuous monitoring, the approach effectively enhanced the partner's digital literacy and self-reliance. This method reflects the principles of experiential learning, which are widely recognized as effective in supporting MSMEs' readiness to adopt new technologies (Sifwah et al., 2024). The measurable improvements in engagement—such as increased followers, views, and interactions—confirm that consistent digital campaigns strengthen brand equity and stimulate consumer interest (Rialti & Zollo, 2021; Shandy, 2023). Moreover, the mentoring process ensured that the partner could independently manage digital branding strategies beyond the program's duration.

Despite these successes, several challenges remain. Content production, both in terms of quality and frequency, needs to be improved to maintain customer interest over time. Additionally, the limited duration of the program restricted the ability to measure long-term impacts such as sustained sales growth, customer loyalty, and repeat purchases. Future initiatives should include extended mentoring periods, advanced digital marketing training—such as analytics and campaign optimization—and continuous performance evaluation to ensure sustainable outcomes. Addressing these challenges will be essential for maximizing the long-term benefits of digital branding interventions.

In conclusion, this program demonstrates that a structured digital branding strategy can effectively support MSMEs in transitioning from traditional to modern marketing practices. Strengthening online presence through social media and digital delivery platforms not only increases market reach but also contributes to long-term business growth and regional economic development in the Industry 4.0 era. By combining visual identity improvements, social media activation, and hands-on mentoring, the program provides a replicable model for empowering MSMEs to thrive in an increasingly digital economy.

Conclusion

This community service program successfully implemented a structured mentoring process to strengthen the digital branding of MSMEs "Solali" restaurant. The program achieved its objectives by improving the partner's digital literacy, enhancing skills in managing TikTok and GoFood business accounts, and developing creative promotional content. The design of a new logo and product packaging provided a professional brand identity, while the activation of social media and delivery platforms expanded the restaurant's market reach. The results demonstrate that digital branding mentorship can significantly improve MSMEs ability to compete in the Industry 4.0 era. Increased customer engagement, follower growth, and the partner's ability to independently manage digital platforms indicate the program's effectiveness. However, some challenges remain, including the need for more consistent and higher-quality content production and the necessity of long-term performance monitoring. Future initiatives should focus on developing advanced digital marketing strategies and sustaining the momentum of digital branding efforts to ensure long-term business growth and competitiveness.

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