

OPTIMIZATION OF DIGITAL MEDIA AS A MEANS OF STRENGTHENING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AMONG MSME ACTORS

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Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in economic development but often face limitations in digital literacy, English language proficiency, and basic business management, which reduce their competitiveness in the digital era. This community service program aimed to optimize digital media as an integrated platform to strengthen practical English skills and business management competencies among MSME actors. The program employed a participatory and practice-oriented approach consisting of training, hands-on practice, and continuous mentoring. Training activities focused on functional English for business communication, digital media utilization for marketing, and basic management practices such as branding and simple bookkeeping. The results indicate improvements in participants' ability to use English for product promotion, increased use of digital media for marketing activities, and greater awareness of structured business management. Participants also showed higher engagement and confidence in applying digital tools to their daily business operations. These findings suggest that integrated digital media-based capacity building is effective in supporting MSME empowerment and sustainable economic development.

Keywords: Digital Media, Business English, Business Management, MSMEs, Community Service

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in economic development, employment generation, and poverty reduction, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. MSMEs contribute significantly to national gross domestic product (GDP) and absorb a large proportion of the workforce. However, despite their economic importance, many MSMEs continue to face structural and capacity-related challenges that limit their growth, sustainability, and competitiveness in an increasingly globalized and digitalized economy. Among these challenges, limited digital literacy, insufficient English language proficiency, and weak business management practices remain dominant constraints.

The acceleration of digital transformation has fundamentally changed the way businesses operate. Digital technologies enable enterprises to access broader markets, reduce operational costs, improve efficiency, and enhance customer engagement. For MSMEs, digital media such as social media platforms, e-commerce marketplaces, and digital design applications provide affordable and accessible tools to compete beyond local boundaries. Studies have consistently shown that digital adoption positively affects MSME performance by improving marketing effectiveness, customer relationships, and business innovation (Harsono, 2024). Digital marketing strategies, in particular, allow MSMEs to reach new customer segments, strengthen brand identity, and increase sales volumes through online channels (Derus & Abu Bakar, 2024). Despite these benefits, the level of digital adoption among MSMEs remains uneven. Many MSME actors still rely on conventional business practices and underutilize digital media due

to limited knowledge, skills, and confidence in using technology. This digital gap is more pronounced among small-scale entrepreneurs with limited educational backgrounds or those operating in non-urban areas (Sunggara et al., 2024). As a result, MSMEs often fail to maximize the potential of digital platforms for promotion, communication, and business management. Without targeted interventions, this gap may widen and further marginalize MSMEs in the digital economy.

In addition to digital literacy, language proficiency—particularly in English—has emerged as a critical factor influencing MSME competitiveness. English functions as a global lingua franca in international trade, digital communication, and business networking. The majority of online business content, e-commerce platforms, and global market information is presented in English. Consequently, MSMEs with limited English proficiency face difficulties in accessing international markets, understanding global trends, and communicating effectively with foreign customers or partners (Rodliyah & Suryana, 2024).

Research indicates that English language skills contribute significantly to MSME development by supporting marketing communication, customer service, and product promotion in international contexts (Thamrin et al., 2024). English proficiency enables entrepreneurs to create product descriptions, promotional content, and branding messages that appeal to a wider audience. Moreover, it facilitates participation in cross-border e-commerce and digital marketplaces, where English is commonly used as the primary language (Irsani, 2025). However, many MSME owners perceive English as difficult, irrelevant, or inaccessible, leading to low motivation and minimal effort to develop language skills.

The lack of English proficiency becomes more problematic when combined with limited digital skills. Digital platforms often require users to understand basic English terminology, interface instructions, and content creation guidelines. MSMEs that lack both digital and language competencies are therefore doubly disadvantaged. This condition restricts their ability to fully engage with digital media, limiting business growth opportunities and global exposure. Integrating English language development with digital media training offers a strategic solution to address these interconnected challenges.

Beyond digital literacy and language skills, effective business management remains a key determinant of MSME success. Many MSMEs operate informally with minimal planning, weak financial management, and limited understanding of marketing strategies. Poor record-keeping, lack of cost control, and ineffective branding practices often result in unstable business performance and vulnerability to external shocks. Studies emphasize that managerial competence—particularly in marketing and financial management—significantly influences MSME sustainability and resilience (Jumbulingam et al., 2025).

Digital media can serve as an effective tool not only for marketing but also for improving business management practices. Simple digital applications can support bookkeeping, inventory management, customer relationship management, and data-driven decision-making. When combined with basic business management training, digital media enable MSMEs to operate more efficiently and professionally. Furthermore, the use of digital platforms encourages entrepreneurs to adopt a more strategic mindset by analyzing customer engagement, sales trends, and promotional effectiveness (Derus & Abu Bakar, 2024).

In this context, community service programs (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat/PKM) play a strategic role in empowering MSMEs through capacity building and knowledge transfer. PKM initiatives provide opportunities for academics to translate research-based knowledge into practical solutions that address real-world problems faced by communities. By focusing on the optimization of digital media for strengthening English proficiency and business management, PKM programs can directly contribute to MSME empowerment and inclusive economic development.

An integrated PKM approach that combines digital media training, practical English instruction, and basic business management education is particularly relevant. Such an approach ensures that MSME actors do not only learn technical skills but also understand how to apply them in real business contexts. Practical, contextualized learning such as creating English product descriptions, developing social media promotions, and managing simple financial records enhances relevance and sustainability of the intervention (Thamrin et al., 2024).

Ultimately, strengthening MSME capacity through digital media optimization, English language proficiency, and improved business management supports broader national development goals, including economic resilience, innovation, and global competitiveness. As the digital economy continues to expand, MSMEs must be equipped with the necessary skills to adapt and thrive. Therefore, initiatives that integrate these three dimensions are essential to ensure that MSMEs are not left behind in the digital transformation process but instead become active and competitive participants in the global marketplace.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of the Program

This community service program (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat/PKM) employed a participatory and practice-oriented approach aimed at strengthening English language skills, digital media utilization, and basic business management competencies among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) actors. The program was designed to address real operational challenges faced by MSMEs by integrating training, hands-on practice, and mentoring into a coherent methodological framework. This approach ensured that knowledge transfer was contextual, applicable, and sustainable.

The PKM activities were implemented through three main stages: (1) preparation and needs assessment, (2) implementation through training and practice, and (3) mentoring and evaluation. Each stage was interconnected and aligned with the program's objectives of optimizing digital media for business communication and management.

Participants and Setting

The participants of this PKM program were MSME actors operating in the local community who were selected based on their willingness to participate and their need for capacity development in digital literacy, English proficiency, and business management. Most participants were small-scale entrepreneurs with limited experience in using digital media for business purposes and minimal exposure to English in professional contexts. The program was

conducted in a hybrid format, combining face-to-face sessions and online assistance to ensure flexibility and accessibility.

Stage 1: Preparation and Needs Assessment

The preparation stage focused on identifying the specific needs and constraints of MSME participants. Data were collected through informal interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. This needs assessment aimed to map participants' initial levels of digital literacy, English language proficiency, and business management practices.

Based on the findings, training materials were developed using a contextual and practical approach. English language materials emphasized functional and business-related expressions, while digital media materials focused on the use of social media platforms, basic design applications, and online marketing tools. Business management materials were simplified to address essential aspects such as product branding, pricing, and basic financial recording.

Stage 2: Training and Hands-on Practice

The implementation stage consisted of structured training sessions followed by hands-on practice. Training was delivered using interactive methods, including demonstrations, guided discussions, and collaborative activities.

1. English Language Training

The English training focused on practical language use for business purposes, including product descriptions, promotional captions, customer greetings, and simple transactional communication. The learning activities emphasized vocabulary development, basic sentence structures, and pronunciation relevant to MSME contexts. Participants were encouraged to immediately apply English expressions in digital promotional content.

2. Digital Media Training

Digital media training introduced participants to the use of social media platforms and simple digital tools for product promotion. Participants learned how to create visually appealing promotional materials, write effective captions, and manage online interactions with customers. The training emphasized hands-on activities, allowing participants to directly create and publish digital content related to their businesses.

3. Business Management Training

Business management training focused on basic marketing strategies, branding concepts, and simple financial management. Participants were guided to understand the importance of consistent branding, pricing strategies, and basic bookkeeping. Digital tools were introduced to support these management activities, reinforcing the integration between technology and business practices.

Stage 3: Mentoring and Assistance

Following the training sessions, participants received mentoring and continuous assistance to support the application of acquired skills. Mentoring was conducted through regular consultations, online communication, and on-site visits when necessary. This stage aimed to address individual challenges, provide feedback, and reinforce learning outcomes.

Mentoring focused on assisting participants in refining their digital promotional content, improving English usage in real business communication, and applying basic management practices consistently. This continuous support was essential to ensure the sustainability of the program's impact and to encourage behavioral change among MSME actors.

Evaluation Techniques

Program evaluation was conducted using qualitative and descriptive methods. Evaluation focused on measuring changes in participants' competencies and practices before and after the program. Indicators included participants' ability to create English-based promotional content, utilize digital media for marketing, and apply basic business management practices.

Data were collected through observations, participant reflections, and documentation of digital outputs produced during the program. Feedback from participants was also gathered to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the program. The evaluation results were used to identify strengths, limitations, and potential improvements for future PKM activities.

Sustainability Strategy

To ensure sustainability, the program emphasized skill transfer and independent practice. Participants were encouraged to continuously apply digital media and English communication in their daily business operations. Training materials and digital resources were provided for ongoing reference. The mentoring network established during the program also served as a support system for participants beyond the formal PKM period.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this community service program were analyzed based on predefined evaluation indicators focusing on participants' competencies in English language use, digital media utilization, and basic business management practices. Data were collected through observations, documentation of participants' outputs, and reflective feedback during and after the mentoring phase.

1. Improvement in Practical English Language Skills

Prior to the program, most MSME actors demonstrated limited confidence and minimal vocabulary for business communication. After the training and mentoring stages, participants were able to produce simple English product descriptions, promotional captions, and basic customer responses. Improvements were observed in vocabulary selection, sentence structure, and contextual appropriateness. Although participants' English proficiency remained at a basic level, their functional use of English for business purposes increased noticeably, particularly in digital marketing contexts.

2. Increased Utilization of Digital Media for Marketing

Before the PKM implementation, digital media use was largely passive and inconsistent. Following the training, participants actively created and uploaded promotional content using social media platforms. Documentation showed improvements in visual quality, message clarity, and posting consistency. Participants also demonstrated better

understanding of engagement features such as captions, hashtags, and direct customer interaction.

3. Strengthening of Basic Business Management Practices

Initial observations revealed weak financial recording and unstructured marketing strategies. After the intervention, several participants began implementing simple bookkeeping practices and showed increased awareness of cost calculation, pricing, and branding consistency. These changes indicate a gradual shift toward more structured business management.

4. Participant Engagement and Program Acceptance

High levels of engagement were observed throughout the program. Participants actively participated in practice sessions and mentoring activities. Reflection data indicated that the program was perceived as relevant, practical, and applicable to daily business operations, particularly due to the mentoring component.

Conclusions

The findings of this PKM program indicate that contextual and practice-based interventions are effective in improving MSME capacity. The observed improvement in functional English usage supports the view that language instruction is more effective when it is embedded within authentic and goal-oriented activities. According to Hutchinson and Waters' English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework, language learning becomes meaningful when aligned with learners' immediate professional needs, such as business communication and promotion activities (Hutchinson & Waters, 2019). In this program, English was not taught as an abstract subject but as a practical tool directly linked to digital business practices, which enhanced participants' motivation and applicability.

The increased utilization of digital media among participants demonstrates the importance of guided experiential learning in promoting digital inclusion. Prior research highlights that MSME digital adoption is strongly influenced by perceived usefulness and ease of use rather than access alone (Venkatesh et al., 2016). The hands-on approach applied in this PKM allowed participants to overcome technological anxiety and develop confidence through repeated practice. This confirms that digital capacity-building programs should prioritize applied learning rather than purely theoretical instruction.

Improvements in basic business management practices further emphasize the interconnected nature of digital skills and managerial competence. Digital tools function not only as marketing channels but also as instruments for organizing business operations and decision-making. As noted by OECD (2020), MSMEs that integrate digital tools into management processes tend to demonstrate higher adaptability and resilience. The introduction of simple bookkeeping and branding practices in this program contributed to participants' awareness of business sustainability, even at an early stage of adoption.

The mentoring component played a critical role in reinforcing learning outcomes and ensuring behavioral change. Unlike short-term training programs, mentoring provides continuous feedback and individualized support, which are essential for adult learners and small business owners. Community-based entrepreneurship studies suggest that mentoring significantly enhances skill retention and implementation, particularly in informal business settings.

(Klofsten et al., 2019). Participants' positive responses to mentoring in this PKM indicate that sustained assistance is key to long-term impact.

Overall, the results demonstrate that an integrated PKM model combining English language development, digital media optimization, and basic business management training is effective in addressing MSME challenges. However, the program also revealed the need for longer mentoring duration and the incorporation of quantitative performance indicators, such as sales growth or customer engagement metrics, in future implementations. Expanding the evaluation framework would allow for more comprehensive measurement of program impact.

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrates that optimizing digital media as an integrated platform for strengthening English language skills and business management competencies is effective in enhancing the capacity of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) actors. The implementation of a structured approach combining training, hands-on practice, and continuous mentoring resulted in improved functional use of English for business communication, increased utilization of digital media for product promotion, and greater awareness of basic business management practices. The integration of contextual English learning with digital media activities enhanced relevance and participant engagement, while basic management training supported more structured and sustainable business practices. Based on these findings, future PKM initiatives are recommended to adopt integrated and practice-oriented approaches, extend mentoring periods to ensure sustained skill adoption, and incorporate quantitative performance indicators to strengthen impact evaluation. In addition, collaboration among higher education institutions, local governments, and MSME support organizations is encouraged to scale up and sustain similar programs, thereby contributing to inclusive and sustainable economic development.

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