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**TRANSFORMATION FROM TRADITIONAL TO DIGITAL
MARKETING THROUGH INNOVATION SOCIALIZATION IN
MARKETING FOR RURAL COFFEE MSMEs IN ULU BELU**

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Abstract

Rural coffee MSMEs in Ulu Belu District, Tanggamus Regency, are still predominantly characterized by traditional marketing practices that rely on direct sales and local networks, resulting in limited market access and suboptimal product value addition. The development of digital technology presents a strategic opportunity for coffee MSMEs to expand market reach, enhance competitiveness, and build local product brand identity. This Community Service Program aims to encourage the transformation from traditional to digital marketing through the socialization of marketing innovation among rural coffee MSMEs in Ulu Belu.

The program methods include socialization of digital marketing concepts, training on the use of social media as a promotional tool, introduction to branding and product packaging strategies, and mentoring in the creation of digital marketing content. The activities are carried out in a participatory manner by directly involving coffee MSME actors. The expected outcomes include increased knowledge and skills of MSME actors in implementing digital marketing, the establishment of local coffee brand identity, and expanded market access. This program is expected to strengthen (enhance) the competitiveness of MSMEs and promote (foster) sustainable rural economic growth (development).

INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the coffee sector in the rural area of Ulu Belu, Tanggamus Regency, play a strategic role in supporting the local economy and maintaining the sustainability of the region's leading commodity. MSMEs not only

drive the rural economy, but also as a means of improving community welfare and creating employment (Tambunan, 2019). However, most coffee MSME operators still rely on traditional marketing patterns that focus on direct sales, local networks, and intermediaries, resulting in limited market reach and suboptimal product added value (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This condition makes the competitiveness of rural coffee MSMEs relatively low, especially in the face of increasingly competitive and digital-based market dynamics.

The development of information and communication technology presents a significant opportunity for MSMEs to transform their marketing through digital marketing. Digital marketing allows businesses to expand market access, build brand identity, and increase consumer interaction more effectively and efficiently (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). However, the main challenges faced by rural coffee MSMEs are low digital literacy, limited understanding of marketing innovations, and a lack of ongoing guidance (Nuryanti & Hidayat, 2021). This knowledge and skills gap hinders the optimal adoption of digital technology in MSME marketing activities.

Based on a literature review, various studies show that the application of digital marketing and marketing innovation positively improves the performance of MSMEs, both in terms of sales, product visibility, and business sustainability (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Marketing innovations, such as social media, marketplaces, and digital content, can create added value for products and strengthen MSME's competitiveness in a broader market (Teece, 2018). Socialization and education on digital marketing have also proven effective in encouraging MSME players to shift their mindset from a traditional marketing orientation to a more modern, adaptive approach to technological developments (Setyawati et al., 2020).

Therefore, this community service activity was designed to address partners' need by disseminating marketing innovations as an effort to encourage the transformation of rural coffee MSME marketing in Ulu Belu. The objectives of this activity are to improve the

understanding and capacity of coffee MSME (practitioner) in implementing digital marketing, introduce marketing innovation strategies that are in line with rural characteristics, and encourage the strengthening of the local economy through increased product competitiveness. Through this activity, it is hoped that rural coffee MSMEs will adapt to the digital ecosystem and contribute sustainably to rural economic development.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This community service activity uses a participatory and educational approach, placing rural coffee MSME actors (practitioners) in Ulu Belu District, Tanggamus Regency, as active partners in every stage of the activity. This approach was chosen to ensure that the solutions offered are in line with the needs, characteristics, and level of readiness of partners in facing the transformation of marketing from traditional to digital patterns. This method also enables a two-way learning process between the implementation team and partners, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the activity's outcomes. The following image shows the stages of the activity:



Figure 1. Stages of the Community Socialization Forum

The implementation of activities began with identifying problems and partner needs through field observations and direct discussions with coffee MSME actors. This stage aimed to explore the initial conditions related to the marketing patterns used, the level of digital literacy, and the obstacles faced in marketing products. Next, socialization materials for marketing innovation are designed and tailored to the rural context, including an introduction to the concept of digital marketing, the use of social media and marketplaces, and strategies to strengthen the brand identity of local coffee products.

The next stage is the implementation of socialization and mentoring, which is carried out through the delivery of materials, interactive discussions, and simple practices for using digital media as a marketing tool. This activity is designed to be practical so that partners can immediately understand and apply the marketing innovations introduced. The final stage involves evaluating the activity to assess partners' level of understanding, their response to the material, and the potential for applying digital marketing in the sustainability of coffee MSME businesses. This evaluation forms the basis for recommendations on further activities to strengthen the rural economy based on coffee MSMEs.

RESULTS

Community service activities focused on transforming traditional marketing into digital marketing by disseminating marketing innovations to rural coffee MSMEs in Ulu Belu Subdistrict, Tanggamus Regency, have been carried out in accordance with the planned objectives. The results of the activities show positive changes in the knowledge, attitudes, and readiness to adopt digital marketing as a business development strategy.

Initial findings indicate that most coffee MSME operators still rely on conventional marketing methods, such as direct sales to collectors, local markets, and personal networks. (Cahyani dkk., 2024; Wati dkk., 2024) The use of digital media is still very limited, both in

terms of knowledge and technical skills. This aligns with Tambunan's (2019) findings, which state that rural MSMEs generally face limitations in terms of access to technology and market information.

After the implementation of marketing innovation socialization, partners' understanding of digital marketing. MSME players began to understand the benefits of using social media and marketplaces to promote and distribute coffee products. Partners also showed interest in building brand identity, such as the use of brand names, more informative packaging, and the creation of simple content for digital promotion. These results indicate that socialization improved the digital literacy of MSMEs, as also found in the community service activities of Setyawati et al. (2020).

In addition to increased understanding, the activity also showed a change in partners' attitudes toward marketing innovation. MSME players who were previously skeptical of digital marketing began to see opportunities for market expansion and increased product value. Several partners began experimenting with social media to promote their coffee products, albeit on a small scale. This shows MSME's initial readiness to gradually transform their marketing.

DISCUSSION

The results of this community service activity indicate that socializing marketing innovations is an effective approach to encourage the transformation of rural coffee MSME marketing. (Almuhyidin dkk., t.t.; Rajput & Gandhi, 2024) the increase in partners' understanding of digital marketing is in line with modern marketing theory, which emphasizes the importance of utilizing digital technology in building relationships with consumers and expanding market reach (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Digital marketing provides MSMEs with opportunities to compete not only at the local level-, but also regionally and even nationally.

These findings also support the views of Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), who state that digital marketing enables businesses to increase product visibility at a relatively low cost. In the context of rural coffee MSMEs, digital marketing is a strategic solution to overcome geographical limitations and dependence on intermediaries. This transformation has the potential to increase the added value of local coffee products and strengthen the bargaining position of MSME players. From a marketing innovation perspective, the results of the activity show that introducing simple strategies, such as product branding and social media use, can trigger a change in the mindset of partners. This aligns with Teece (2018), who emphasizes that innovation, including marketing innovation, is key to creating sustainable competitive advantage. Although implementation is still in its early stages, the partners' readiness to try digital strategies shows the potential for the sustainability of the community service program. (Nursari et al., 2024)

When compared with other research and community service activities, these findings are consistent with Dwivedi et al. (2021), who stated that the adoption of digital marketing in MSMEs has a positive impact on business performance. However, this activity also revealed that continuous assistance is still needed so that digital marketing transformation can run optimally. Limited digital literacy and resources are challenges that need to be overcome through follow-up programs. Overall, the results and discussion show that this community service activity has succeeded in achieving its main objective, namely to increase the understanding and readiness of rural coffee MSMEs in adopting digital marketing. The marketing transformation driven by the dissemination of marketing innovations has the potential to strengthen the rural economy, particularly in increasing the competitiveness and sustainability of coffee MSMEs in Ulu Belu District. The following table illustrates the results of the dissemination forum during the field visit based on the results of the forms that were distributed:

Table 1. Assessment aspects before and after the activity took place

Assessed Aspects	Before the Program	After the Program
Marketing pattern	Traditional (direct sales & middlemen)	Combination of traditional & digital marketing
Understanding of digital marketing	Low	Improved
Use of social media	None / very limited	Started to be used
Understanding of product branding	None	Began to understand branding concepts
Readiness for innovation adoption	Low	Fairly ready

Source: processed data, 2026

Before the program, MSMEs relied mainly on traditional marketing methods such as direct sales and middlemen. Their understanding of digital marketing and product branding was very limited, and social media was rarely or never used. In addition, their readiness to adopt innovation was still low. After the program, significant improvements were observed. Marketing strategies evolved into a combination of traditional and digital approaches. Participants demonstrated better understanding of digital marketing and began utilizing social media as a promotional tool. They also started to understand basic branding concepts and showed greater readiness to adopt innovation in their business activities.

The following are photos of the community service activities that took place:



Figure 2 Activities during the event

CONCLUSION

The community service activity, which focused on transforming traditional marketing into digital marketing by disseminating marketing innovations to rural coffee MSMEs in Ulu Belu Subdistrict, Tanggamus Regency, has achieved its objectives and

targets. The results of the activity show an increase in MSME actors' understanding and awareness of the importance of digital marketing as a business development strategy. The dissemination of marketing innovations has encouraged partners to encourage a change in the mindset of partners from dependence on traditional marketing to readiness to gradually adopt digital marketing. In addition, this activity has contributed to increasing digital literacy, strengthening the competitiveness of coffee MSMEs, and opening up opportunities for market expansion and increased product added value. Overall, this community service program has strengthened the rural economy and has laid the foundation for the development of sustainable assistance programs to ensure the continuity of the marketing transformation of coffee MSMEs.

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