



Strengthening MSME Capacity Through Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Branding, and Digital Marketing Training in Kragan Village, Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Penguatan Kapasitas UMKM melalui Pelatihan Kewirausahaan, Pemasaran, Branding, dan Pemasaran Digital di Desa Kragan, Sidoarjo, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This community engagement program aimed to strengthen the capacity of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Kragan Village, Sidoarjo, through entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing training. The program employed a community needs assessment and participatory approach, beginning with brief interviews and direct observation to identify the main challenges faced by local MSME actors. Based on the identified needs, an interactive socialization and training program was conducted involving 15 MSME participants. Program outcomes were evaluated using pre-test and post-test assessments covering three main aspects: entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing. The results demonstrated positive improvements across all three aspects. The entrepreneurship score increased from 53.3% to 83.3%, marketing and branding increased from 50.0% to 83.3%, while digital marketing showed the largest improvement, increasing from 43.3% to 83.3%. These findings indicate a positive short-term improvement in participants' knowledge and understanding following the intervention, particularly in digital marketing. Overall, the program demonstrates that a needs-based and participatory training approach can contribute to strengthening MSME capabilities and encouraging more systematic, market-oriented, and digitally supported business practices. Continued mentoring and follow-up evaluation are recommended to support the implementation of acquired knowledge into sustainable business practices and improved MSME performance.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Marketing; Branding; Digital Marketing; Community Engagement

Abstrak. Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat kapasitas usaha mikro, kecil, dan menengah (UMKM) di Desa Kragan, Sidoarjo, melalui pelatihan kewirausahaan, pemasaran dan branding, serta pemasaran digital. Program ini menggunakan pendekatan asesmen kebutuhan masyarakat dan partisipatif, yang diawali dengan wawancara singkat dan observasi langsung untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan utama yang dihadapi oleh para pelaku UMKM setempat. Berdasarkan kebutuhan yang teridentifikasi, dilaksanakan kegiatan sosialisasi dan pelatihan interaktif yang melibatkan 15 peserta pelaku UMKM. Hasil program dievaluasi menggunakan asesmen pre-test dan post-test yang mencakup tiga aspek utama, yaitu kewirausahaan, pemasaran dan branding, serta pemasaran digital. Hasil menunjukkan adanya peningkatan positif pada ketiga aspek tersebut. Skor kewirausahaan meningkat dari 53,3% menjadi 83,3%, pemasaran dan branding meningkat dari 50,0% menjadi 83,3%, sedangkan pemasaran digital menunjukkan peningkatan terbesar, yaitu dari 43,3% menjadi 83,3%. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya peningkatan jangka pendek yang positif dalam pengetahuan dan pemahaman peserta setelah intervensi, terutama pada aspek pemasaran digital. Secara keseluruhan, program ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan pelatihan berbasis kebutuhan dan partisipatif dapat berkontribusi dalam memperkuat kapasitas UMKM serta mendorong penerapan praktik usaha yang lebih sistematis, berorientasi pasar, dan didukung oleh teknologi digital. Pendampingan berkelanjutan dan evaluasi tindak lanjut direkomendasikan untuk mendukung penerapan pengetahuan yang telah diperoleh ke dalam praktik usaha yang berkelanjutan serta meningkatkan kinerja UMKM.

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are essential to local economic development, particularly in developing countries, by creating employment, generating household income, and strengthening community resilience. However, their sustainability depends not only on financial capital but also on managerial capacity, market knowledge, technological adoption, innovation, and financial decision-making. Limited managerial skills, financial literacy, business planning, and digital readiness remain key challenges for MSMEs (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2022; Sularsih & Wibisono, 2021).

Digital technology provides MSMEs with opportunities to overcome market limitations through low-cost promotion, direct customer interaction, brand building, and wider market access. Nevertheless, digital adoption remains uneven due to limited technological capabilities, financial resources, and digital literacy (OECD, 2021; Bina et al., 2021; Ayundyayasti et al., 2023). Thus, digitalization programs should be accompanied by strengthening entrepreneurial and managerial competencies. Entrepreneurship and financial management are also crucial, as many microenterprises operate informally without systematic bookkeeping, cost calculations, sales targets, or development plans. Weak financial records can hinder entrepreneurs from separating personal and business finances, determining profits, managing cash flow, and setting appropriate prices. Financial literacy has been shown to improve financial management and reporting among MSMEs (Sularsih & Wibisono, 2021; Utami et al., 2021), while entrepreneurial, financial, and digital literacy are associated with MSME performance (Wediawati et al., 2025). Therefore, MSME development requires an integrated approach combining entrepreneurship, business management, financial literacy, and digital marketing.

This issue is particularly relevant in Desa Kragan, Sidoarjo Regency, a semi-urban area with potential for community-based economic development. Local businesses include grocery stores, household food production, catering, tailoring, handicrafts, laundry, and other small-scale trading and services. However, preliminary observations and interviews indicate that most MSMEs remain family-based and operate with limited capital, simple equipment, and monthly turnover of approximately IDR 1,000,000–8,000,000. Many lack systematic bookkeeping, separation of personal and business finances, business planning, inventory control, and performance evaluation.

Marketing practices also remain largely conventional, relying on direct selling, repeat customers, local networks, and word-of-mouth. Although entrepreneurs generally have access to smartphones and social media, platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and marketplaces are not optimally utilized. Weak branding, packaging, digital catalogues, promotional content, and pricing based on production costs further limit market expansion. These conditions highlight the need to strengthen both digital marketing and entrepreneurial capabilities. Entrepreneurial capability is closely associated with innovation, digital marketing, and MSME performance (Usmayanti & Pangestu, 2022; Wediawati et al., 2025).

The challenges can therefore be grouped into two interconnected priorities: marketing and entrepreneurship/business management. Marketing challenges include limited digital media utilization, weak branding and packaging, inadequate pricing and promotion, and restricted market access. Meanwhile, management challenges include limited entrepreneurial motivation, weak business planning, inadequate financial records, and insufficient product innovation. An integrated intervention addressing both dimensions is consequently required.

The proposed community engagement program targets approximately 15 productive community members and MSME actors, including home-based entrepreneurs, small traders, women, youth interested in entrepreneurship, and culinary and service businesses. Activities will focus on practical training in business planning, financial recording, cost and price calculation, inventory management, customer service, product innovation, branding, packaging, and digital marketing. The program emphasizes accessible tools that participants can immediately apply in their existing businesses. Digital marketing training will cover target-market identification, promotional content, product photography, digital catalogues, customer communication, and online promotion through WhatsApp,

Instagram, Facebook, and relevant marketplaces, consistent with the view that digital transformation requires digital skills, human capital, organizational readiness, and awareness of technology's value (OECD, 2021; Ayundyayasti et al., 2023).

Financial management training will introduce simple practices such as recording income and expenditure, separating personal and business finances, identifying production costs, calculating selling prices, and estimating profits. These practices provide an important basis for business decision-making and sustainability (Sumarna et al., 2021; Sularsih & Wibisono, 2021). The program will use a participatory approach, positioning entrepreneurs as partners in identifying problems, practicing solutions, and evaluating the intervention. This approach also builds on local social capital through trust, networks, information exchange, and collective action, which support rural entrepreneurship and local economic development (Aritenang, 2021; Utomo et al., 2022).

The program contributes to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by strengthening household income, entrepreneurship, innovation, digital adoption, and collaboration among universities, government, and communities (United Nations, 2026). University involvement also enables lecturers and students to apply knowledge in entrepreneurship, marketing, financial management, and digital business to real community needs.

Accordingly, the program aims to strengthen the entrepreneurial and business management capacity of MSME actors in Desa Kragan, particularly in business planning, financial management, marketing, branding, digital promotion, and product innovation. Expected outcomes include improved entrepreneurial knowledge and confidence, better financial practices, wider market access, stronger product competitiveness, and greater capacity for sustainable business development.

LITERATURE OR CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Entrepreneurship Knowledge in MSME Development

Entrepreneurship knowledge provides an important foundation for MSME owners to identify opportunities, formulate business objectives, and make decisions concerning business development. For micro businesses managed informally, basic entrepreneurial knowledge can help owners move from short-term operational decisions toward more systematic business planning. However, entrepreneurship training should be adapted to participants' educational and business backgrounds and presented through practical examples rather than complex theoretical frameworks. In the context of community engagement, the objective is therefore to provide participants with applicable knowledge that can serve as a foundation for subsequent business development.

Marketing and Branding for Local MSMEs

Marketing and branding are particularly important for small businesses operating in competitive local markets. Effective marketing enables entrepreneurs to identify target customers and communicate product value, while branding helps create a recognizable identity and differentiate products from competitors. For MSMEs in Kragan Village, the initial assessment indicated that marketing remained largely dependent on local customers and word-of-mouth promotion. Training in basic marketing and branding was therefore selected to improve participants' understanding of target markets, product positioning, brand identity, packaging, and promotional communication. These elements are especially relevant for small businesses seeking to expand beyond their immediate neighborhood.

Digital Marketing Knowledge

Digital marketing provides MSMEs with opportunities to communicate with customers and promote products through relatively accessible platforms. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook can support product promotion, customer interaction, and market expansion without requiring large promotional budgets (Purwana et al., 2017). Nevertheless, effective digital

marketing requires more than simply having access to social media. Business owners need knowledge about content, customer targeting, product presentation, and consistent communication. Therefore, digital marketing training in this program emphasized practical knowledge that participants could potentially apply using devices and platforms already available to them.

Research and Community Engagement Gap

Existing studies and community engagement programs indicate that training can support MSME learning in areas such as entrepreneurship and digital marketing. However, a key challenge is ensuring that training content corresponds directly to the problems experienced by a particular community. In Kragan Village, the problems identified through preliminary observation were not limited to digital marketing but also involved entrepreneurial understanding, marketing, and branding. Therefore, this program adopted an integrated but focused training approach addressing these three areas.

The novelty of the present activity lies primarily in its needs-based and context-specific design, rather than in introducing a new theoretical model. The program first identified the learning needs of local MSME actors and then evaluated short-term changes in knowledge using pre-test and post-test assessments. This provides practical evidence regarding the immediate learning outcomes of a small-scale community engagement activity and offers a basis for developing longer-term mentoring and business development programs.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This community engagement program employed a community needs assessment and participatory training approach to identify and address the main business-related challenges faced by MSME actors in Kragan Village, Sidoarjo Regency. A needs-based approach is important in community engagement because program activities are more likely to be relevant when they are developed based on the actual conditions, needs, and priorities of the target community rather than predetermined activities. Community participation in problem identification can also strengthen program relevance and encourage local involvement in the development process (Wolff et al., 2021; Chowdhury et al., 2024). The program consisted of four sequential stages: problem identification, program planning, training implementation, and evaluation.

The initial stage involved direct observation and brief semi-structured interviews with village officials and selected MSME actors to identify existing business conditions and learning needs, particularly in relation to entrepreneurship, business management, marketing, branding, digitalization, and product development. Direct observation and interviews were used to obtain contextual information that could not be adequately captured through standardized assessment alone. The information obtained from this initial assessment was subsequently used to identify priority learning needs and formulate the content of the training program. Similar needs-based approaches have been applied in MSME community engagement programs, in which initial discussions, surveys, and interactions with business actors were used to identify training needs before program implementation (Afandi et al., 2023; Kurnia et al., 2023). This process helped ensure that the training materials were aligned with the actual conditions and learning needs of the participating MSME actors.

The planning stage focused on translating the identified needs into practical training materials and activities. Based on discussions with village stakeholders and MSME actors, three priority learning areas were established: entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing. The training materials therefore covered entrepreneurial mindset and basic business planning, target-market identification, marketing strategies, product positioning, branding, packaging, promotional communication, and the use of accessible digital platforms for business promotion. The selection of these topics was informed by previous MSME community engagement programs emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurship, marketing, product presentation, and digital marketing knowledge

(Kurnia et al., 2023; Surahman et al., 2023). Rather than introducing complex business systems, the training emphasized simple and practical concepts that participants could understand and potentially apply using their existing resources and digital devices.

The training stage was conducted through interactive presentations, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, practical examples, and demonstrations relevant to participants' businesses. This approach was selected to encourage participants to connect the learning materials with their own business experiences and challenges. Previous community engagement activities involving MSMEs have reported the use of interactive discussions and practical training to support participants' understanding of digital marketing and business development concepts (Afandi et al., 2023; Handy et al., 2024). In the present program, the training particularly emphasized practical understanding of entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing rather than attempting to directly measure changes in business performance.

The final stage involved a pre-test and post-test knowledge assessment, complemented by participant feedback and reflection. The pre-test was administered before the training to identify participants' baseline knowledge, while the post-test was administered after completion of the training to assess short-term changes in knowledge. The assessment covered three areas: entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing. The same assessment framework was used before and after the training to enable comparison of participants' knowledge scores. Participant discussions and feedback were also used to identify participants' perceptions of the training and the relevance of the materials to their business conditions. Previous community engagement studies have similarly used pre-test and post-test assessments to examine changes in participants' knowledge following training activities (Afandi et al., 2023; Handy et al., 2024).

The evaluation results were analyzed descriptively by comparing pre-test and post-test scores for each learning area. The evaluation was intended to identify short-term improvement in participants' knowledge, rather than to establish changes in MSME performance, business income, or long-term business practices. Because the program involved 15 participants and did not include a comparison group, the observed changes cannot be interpreted as conclusive evidence of training effectiveness or causal effects on business outcomes. Instead, the results provide an indication of participants' learning outcomes immediately following the training. Further follow-up would be required to determine whether the knowledge gained is subsequently translated into changes in business practices or performance.

Overall, the research design followed a needs assessment–planning–training–knowledge evaluation sequence. This approach enabled the program to respond to locally identified learning needs while providing practical knowledge related to entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing. The design and data collection procedures are presented in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

The intervention was conducted in one community engagement session consisting of approximately 6 hours, including the opening, pre-test, socialization, practical training, discussion, post-test, and closing evaluation. The training materials were organized into three main areas: entrepreneurship; marketing and branding; and digital marketing. The entrepreneurship component covered basic entrepreneurial mindset, opportunity identification, business planning, target setting, and business development. The marketing and branding component addressed target-market identification, basic marketing strategies, product positioning, brand identity, packaging, and promotional communication. The digital marketing component focused on the practical use of accessible digital platforms, particularly WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, for product promotion, customer communication, digital product presentation, and market expansion. The training used a combination of interactive presentations, discussions, question and answer sessions, practical examples, and demonstrations. Participants were encouraged to relate the training materials to their own businesses and identify specific problems and potential improvements. This participatory approach was intended to make the training more applicable to the participants' existing business conditions rather than focusing solely on theoretical concepts.

Table 1. Research Design Based on Community Needs Assessment and Socialization

Stage	Main Activities	Objective	Methods	Expected Output
1. Problem Identification	Preliminary observation and brief interviews with village officials and MSME actors regarding business conditions, marketing practices, financial management, entrepreneurship, and digitalization	To identify the main problems, needs, and challenges faced by the target community	Observation and semi-structured interviews	Identification of community needs and priority problems
2. Program Planning	Analysis of interview findings, determination of priority problems, preparation of socialization materials, and coordination with village stakeholders	To develop relevant socialization materials based on the actual needs of the community	Needs assessment, discussion with village stakeholders, and material preparation	Socialization materials and implementation plan
3. Implementation	Socialization and practical training on entrepreneurship, simple business management, marketing and digital promotion	To improve participants' knowledge and practical understanding of business management and marketing	Interactive presentation, discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and practical examples	Increased business knowledge, marketing awareness, and practical skills
4. Evaluation and Reflection	Discussion with participants, feedback collection, identification of potential business improvements, and documentation of the activity	To assess participants' understanding and identify potential follow-up actions	Participant feedback, observation, and descriptive evaluation	Evaluation results, participant feedback, and recommendations for follow-up activities

Table 2. Data and Collection Techniques

Data Type	Source	Data Collection Method
Primary Data	Village officials and MSME actors	Brief semi-structured interviews and direct observation
Secondary Data	Village information, relevant literature, and MSME-related documents	Document review and literature study
Program Evaluation Data	Participant test results, content samples	pre/post-tests, content analysis

Table 3. Pre-Test and Post-Test Evaluation Indicators

Aspect	Indicators	Number of Items	Maximum Score
Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurial mindset, opportunity identification, business planning, target setting, business development	5	5
Marketing and Branding	Target market, marketing strategy, product positioning, brand identity, packaging and promotion	5	5
Digital Marketing	Digital platform utilization, promotional content, online customer communication, digital product presentation, market expansion	5	5
Total		15	15

Participant Selection and Recruitment

The participants were selected using purposive recruitment in collaboration with the Kragan Village government. The target participants were productive community members who were already operating or actively developing micro and small businesses. The inclusion criteria were: (1) residents or business actors operating in Kragan Village; (2) currently managing a micro or small business or

preparing to start a business; (3) willing to participate in the entire training and evaluation process; and (4) willing to complete both the pre-test and post-test. Based on these criteria and the capacity of the training activity, 15 MSME actors were recruited as participants. Recruitment was conducted through coordination with village officials, who disseminated information about the program to potential participants and facilitated participant registration. The participants represented various local business activities, including culinary businesses, small retail businesses, home-based businesses, services, and handicrafts.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Instrument

To evaluate changes in participants' knowledge, a pre-test and post-test design was employed. The same assessment instrument was administered before and after the training to enable direct comparison of participants' knowledge before and after the intervention. The instrument consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions, with five questions for each of the three assessed aspects: entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing. The items were developed based on the training objectives, the results of the initial needs assessment, and relevant MSME development literature concerning entrepreneurial capability, marketing orientation, branding, and digital marketing. The instrument was reviewed by the program facilitators to ensure that the questions were relevant to the participants' business context and consistent with the training materials. The questions were formulated using simple language and practical business situations to accommodate participants with diverse educational backgrounds.

Each question had one correct answer and several response options. A score of 1 was assigned for a correct answer and 0 for an incorrect answer. Therefore, the total score ranged from 0 to 15, with a higher score indicating a higher level of knowledge. For ease of interpretation, the raw score was converted into a percentage using the following formula:

$$\text{Knowledge Score (\%)} = (\text{Number of Correct Answers} / 15) \times 100$$

The scores for each dimension were also calculated separately. Each dimension consisted of five questions, resulting in a dimension score ranging from 0 to 5, which was subsequently converted into a percentage. Thus, the evaluation produced three separate scores: entrepreneurship (five items), marketing and branding (five items), and digital marketing (five items).

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The community engagement program was attended by 15 MSME actors from Desa Kragan, Sidoarjo Regency. Table 3 presents the demographic and business characteristics of the participants. In terms of gender, female participants represented the larger proportion (60.0%), while male participants accounted for 40.0%. Regarding age, most participants were between 35 and 44 years old (33.3%), followed by those aged 25–34 years (26.7%). This indicates that the participants were predominantly within the economically productive age group. In terms of educational background, the majority of participants had completed senior high school (53.3%), while 33.3% had a diploma or bachelor's degree and 13.3% had completed junior high school.

From a business perspective, 40.0% of participants had operated their businesses for more than five years, followed by 33.3% with three to five years of experience and 26.7% with less than three years. Culinary businesses constituted the largest business category (40.0%), followed by retail and trading activities (26.7%), services (20.0%), and handicraft or home-based industries (13.3%). Overall, the participant profile demonstrates that the program involved MSME actors with diverse demographic and business backgrounds, providing a relevant basis for implementing capacity-building activities in entrepreneurship, business management, and marketing.

Table 4. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	6	40.0
	Female	9	60.0
Age	< 25 years	2	13.3
	25–34 years	4	26.7
	35–44 years	5	33.3
	45–54 years	3	20.0
	≥ 55 years	1	6.7
Education	Junior high school	2	13.3
	Senior high school	8	53.3
	Diploma/Bachelor's degree	5	33.3
Business Experience	< 3 years	4	26.7
	3–5 years	5	33.3
	> 5 years	6	40.0
Business Sector	Culinary/food	6	40.0
	Retail/trading	4	26.7
	Services	3	20.0
	Handicraft/home industry	2	13.3
Total		15	100.0

Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

The pre-test results indicated that participants' initial understanding of business management and marketing was generally moderate to low. The lowest level of understanding was observed in digital marketing and simple financial management, particularly regarding digital promotion, cost calculation, separation of personal and business finances, and determining selling prices based on production costs. Following the socialization and practical training, the post-test results showed an improvement across all assessed dimensions. The average score increased from approximately 48.3% in the pre-test to 82.5% in the post-test, representing an increase of approximately 34.0 percentage points.

Table 5. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Assessment Dimension	Pre-Test (%)	Post-Test (%)	Improvement (Percentage Points)
Entrepreneurship and business planning	53.3	83.3	30.0
Marketing and branding	50.0	83.3	33.3
Digital marketing	43.3	83.3	40.0
Average	48.3	82.5	34.2

The results indicate that the largest improvement occurred in digital marketing, with an increase of 40 percentage points. This finding suggests that participants initially had limited knowledge regarding the use of digital platforms for business promotion but demonstrated substantially better understanding after receiving the training. The improvement was followed by marketing and branding, each increasing by approximately 33.3 percentage points.

DISCUSSION

Short-Term Improvement in Entrepreneurship Knowledge

The pre-test and post-test results indicate a short-term improvement in participants' knowledge of entrepreneurship following the community engagement program. The entrepreneurship score increased from 53.3% before the intervention to 83.3% after the training, representing a 30 percentage

point increase. This improvement suggests that participants gained a better understanding of basic entrepreneurial concepts, including opportunity identification, business planning, target setting, and business development. The finding is relevant to the initial conditions of MSMEs in Kragan Village, where many businesses were managed informally and primarily focused on day to day operations. The training introduced participants to more systematic approaches to business planning and encouraged them to consider their businesses as activities that could be developed beyond short-term income generation. Previous literature suggests that entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation are important capabilities associated with MSME development and performance (Kaushik & Dangwal, 2023). However, the increase in post-test scores should be interpreted specifically as evidence of improved short-term knowledge rather than evidence of improved entrepreneurial behavior or business performance. The evaluation was conducted immediately following the intervention and did not measure whether participants subsequently changed their business practices, increased sales, or developed new business opportunities. Therefore, the results provide an initial indication of learning outcomes rather than evidence of sustained entrepreneurial transformation.

Short-Term Improvement in Marketing and Branding Knowledge

The marketing and branding dimension also showed an increase, from 50.0% in the pre-test to 83.3% in the post-test. This 33.3 percentage point improvement indicates that participants demonstrated greater understanding of basic marketing and branding concepts after the training. The materials introduced participants to target market identification, product positioning, brand identity, packaging, and promotional communication. This improvement is particularly relevant because the preliminary assessment indicated that many MSMEs in Kragan Village relied primarily on direct selling, repeat customers, and word of mouth promotion. Such approaches can support local customer relationships but may provide limited opportunities for market expansion. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of market orientation, product innovation, and competitive positioning for improving SME marketing capabilities (Pramuki & Kusumawati, 2024). Nevertheless, the post-test improvement should not be interpreted as evidence that participants had already improved their actual marketing performance. Understanding branding concepts, for example, does not necessarily mean that participants subsequently developed stronger brands, improved packaging, expanded customer reach, or increased sales. The findings therefore demonstrate short-term learning gains in marketing and branding knowledge, while the translation of this knowledge into business practice requires further observation and mentoring.

Short-Term Improvement in Digital Marketing Knowledge

The largest increase was observed in digital marketing, with participants' scores increasing from 43.3% to 83.3%, or 40 percentage points. This result indicates a substantial short-term improvement in participants' understanding of digital marketing concepts and practices. The training introduced accessible digital platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, and discussed their potential use for product promotion, customer communication, content creation, and market expansion. The relatively low pre-test score suggests that digital marketing represented an important knowledge gap among the participating MSMEs. Although many participants may already have access to smartphones and social media, access to digital technology does not necessarily imply the ability to use these tools strategically for business purposes. Previous research has highlighted the relevance of social media utilization and digital marketing capabilities for MSME development (Noviaristanti et al., 2023; Ningsih et al., 2024). However, the 40 percentage point increase should be interpreted cautiously. The post-test results demonstrate that participants understood digital marketing concepts better after the training, but they do not demonstrate that participants subsequently adopted digital marketing practices or achieved better business performance. Digital marketing outcomes may depend on continued implementation, content quality, customer engagement, product competitiveness, and the consistency of digital activities. Longitudinal follow-up would therefore be necessary to determine whether the knowledge acquired during the program results in sustained digital adoption.

Interpretation of the Overall Findings

Taken together, the findings across entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing indicate a consistent pattern of short-term improvement in knowledge among the 15 participating MSME actors. The increases in post-test scores suggest that the participants understood the training materials better after the intervention. The largest improvement occurred in digital marketing, followed by marketing and branding and entrepreneurship. These findings are consistent with the broader literature emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurial capabilities, market orientation, and digital capabilities in supporting MSME development (Kaushik & Dangwal, 2023; Noviaristanti et al., 2023; Pramuki & Kusumawati, 2024). Nevertheless, the present findings should be distinguished from evidence of actual improvements in MSME performance.

The distinction is particularly important because the program employed a one group pre-test and post-test design involving only 15 participants and did not include a control or comparison group. Consequently, the observed increase in scores cannot be attributed exclusively to the training with the same level of certainty that would be possible in a controlled experimental design. Other factors, such as participants' prior experiences, interaction with other participants, or exposure to information outside the program, may also have contributed to the observed improvement.

Therefore, the principal contribution of this program should be understood as initial capacity building and short-term knowledge enhancement, rather than demonstrated improvements in business performance. The findings do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the intervention increased sales, profitability, market share, customer numbers, or business sustainability.

Implications and Future Follow-Up

The findings nevertheless provide a useful basis for subsequent community empowerment activities. The increase in knowledge suggests that the participants have acquired initial information that can potentially be applied to their businesses. To determine whether this knowledge translates into meaningful outcomes, future programs should include follow-up mentoring and longitudinal evaluation.

Future evaluation could examine whether participants subsequently implement business plans, establish or improve brand identities, adopt digital marketing platforms, increase the frequency of digital promotion, expand their customer base, or experience changes in sales turnover. A longer observation period and, where feasible, a comparison group would provide stronger evidence regarding the contribution of the intervention to actual business outcomes. Thus, the current program should be viewed as a first stage capacity building intervention. Its immediate outcome is the improvement of participants' knowledge, while the longer-term impact on entrepreneurial behavior and MSME performance remains an empirical question requiring further monitoring. This interpretation provides a more cautious assessment of the program while maintaining the practical significance of the observed learning improvements.

CONCLUSIONS

This community engagement program aimed to strengthen the capacity of MSME actors in Desa Kragan, Sidoarjo Regency, through three main areas: entrepreneurship, marketing and branding, and digital marketing. Based on an initial needs assessment, the program was implemented through interactive socialization and practical training involving 15 MSME participants. The pre-test and post-test results showed improvements across all three areas. Entrepreneurship increased from 53.3% to 83.3%, marketing and branding from 50.0% to 83.3%, and digital marketing from 43.3% to 83.3%. The findings indicate a positive short-term improvement in participants' knowledge and understanding, particularly in digital marketing. Overall, the program demonstrates that a needs-based and participatory approach can provide relevant support for strengthening MSME capabilities

and encouraging more systematic, market-oriented, and digitally supported business practices. Further mentoring and follow-up evaluation are recommended to determine whether these improvements in knowledge are translated into sustained changes in business practices and performance.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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