



Empowering Local MSMEs through Branding, Product Design, and Digital Marketing: A Community Engagement Program at Pringgondani Market, Balikpapan

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Abstract: This community service program aims to strengthen the capacity of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in branding, product design, and digital marketing in order to enhance their business competitiveness. The program was implemented through a series of training sessions and mentoring activities involving 57 MSME participants. It consisted of three main components: (1) branding and business preparation, (2) product and packaging design using simple digital tools, and (3) social media-based marketing for digital promotion. Evaluation was conducted using pre- and post-training tests, structured questionnaires, and visual documentation of product packaging. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative analyses of participants' test scores and design outputs. The results indicate substantial improvements in participants' understanding of branding principles, design aesthetics, and digital literacy. Quantitatively, the average test score increased from 9.1 in the pre-test to 10.0 in the post-test, and many participants successfully redesigned their product packaging and began using social media more systematically for promotional purposes. As a result, MSME owners developed clearer product identities, more attractive packaging, and more consistent online engagement. Overall, the program demonstrates that short-term, community-based interventions can effectively enhance MSME competitiveness and digital readiness while supporting sustainable local economic growth. These findings underscore the importance of integrating creativity, technology, and community participation in MSME empowerment initiatives.

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Introduction

Traditional markets continue to play a fundamental role in sustaining local economies by facilitating community-based trade and supporting the livelihoods of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Short et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2024). These markets not only serve as venues for economic exchange but also function as centers of social interaction and cultural expression (Aliyah et al., 2017). Within Indonesia's socio-economic structure, traditional markets have historically contributed to income distribution, employment creation, and local identity formation (Cahya et al., 2025). They remain an integral component of urban life and a pillar of the people's economy that sustains grassroots entrepreneurship and local culture.



Despite their importance, traditional markets face increasing challenges amid rapid modernization and the rise of digital economies (Azis et al., 2024; Oluka, 2024). The proliferation of modern retail outlets such as supermarkets and hypermarkets has cornered traditional markets, reducing their consumer base and competitiveness. Regulatory reforms and urban planning policies have not always provided sufficient protection or empowerment mechanisms for traditional traders, often prioritizing modern retail development over heritage-based commerce (Wibawa et al., 2024). These dynamics have pushed traditional market entrepreneurs—most of whom are MSMEs—to adapt to the evolving business landscape.

MSMEs, which account for over 99% of all business entities in Indonesia and contribute significantly to national employment, are recognized as resilient drivers of economic recovery and innovation (Rahmawati et al., 2023). However, digital transformation has redefined the foundations of business competition, requiring MSMEs to embrace new tools in marketing, branding, and product development to remain viable (Probohudono et al., 2025). The integration of digital technologies with visual communication and storytelling is becoming essential for enhancing market presence and consumer engagement (Iskamto et al., 2024). Digital marketing not only broadens the reach of MSMEs but also fosters interaction, trust, and loyalty through social media and e-commerce platforms.

Pringgondani Market in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, represents a distinctive case of a traditional market with vibrant local economic activity driven by MSMEs. The market hosts a diverse range of products—from local culinary goods and handicrafts to traditional clothing—that reflect the region’s cultural and creative identity. Nevertheless, many MSME actors at Pringgondani still rely on conventional sales methods and have limited exposure to digital marketing and product design. As a result, their products often lack distinctive packaging, brand identity, and consistent visual communication, challenges that have also been documented in similar traditional market contexts (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Moreover, the unique cultural narratives embedded in their production processes are rarely translated into persuasive brand stories that could enhance market value and consumer appeal (Iskamto et al., 2024).

The rapid expansion of information and communication technologies offers promising opportunities for MSMEs to improve visibility and competitiveness. The increasing penetration of internet connectivity and the widespread use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business allow small entrepreneurs to reach audiences at relatively low cost (Iskamto et al., 2024). Yet, effective utilization of these tools requires not only technical skills but also creative literacy—particularly in content design, branding, and sustainable packaging principles that can serve as a “silent salesperson” influencing consumer behavior (Lubis et al., 2025). Therefore, equipping MSMEs with design thinking and digital storytelling skills is crucial to strengthen their product identity and business sustainability.

In response to these intertwined challenges, Institut Teknologi Kalimantan (ITK) implemented a community empowerment program specifically targeting three strategic leverage points for MSMEs at Pringgondani Market: branding, product design, and digital marketing. These domains were identified through the initial needs assessment as the most critical and at the same time the most immediately actionable constraints—MSME products were generally of acceptable quality, but lacked a clear brand identity, attractive and informative packaging, and systematic use of online channels to reach wider markets. Focusing on these aspects is therefore both relevant and urgent: branding and packaging



function as low-cost yet high-impact tools to differentiate products in saturated traditional and digital marketplaces, while basic digital marketing skills enable MSME actors to maintain visibility and customer engagement beyond the physical market. The program thus concentrated on three core components—brand development and business readiness, packaging and product design workshops, and social media marketing practices—as an integrated intervention designed to directly respond to the concrete capability gaps faced by local entrepreneurs (Agustin et al., 2024).

This initiative aligns with Indonesia's broader agenda of strengthening MSME competitiveness through innovation and digital inclusion and contributes to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 9 on Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (Probohudono et al., 2025). At the same time, it offers several distinctive features that strengthen its scientific and practical contribution. First, the program adopted a participatory design, in which training modules, examples, and practice sessions were co-developed with MSME actors and market managers based on their expressed needs and daily constraints, rather than being imposed in a top-down fashion. Second, the branding component explicitly integrated local cultural storytelling by encouraging participants to embed narratives about Pringgondani Market, regional identity, and traditional production practices into their brand names, visual elements, and promotional messages. Third, the program was implemented through close collaboration between ITK, local market management, and community stakeholders, forming a multi-actor ecosystem that combines academic expertise, local policy support, and grassroots entrepreneurial knowledge. These characteristics distinguish the initiative from more generic MSME training programs and provide a contextualized model for community-based empowerment in traditional market settings. The following sections elaborate on the methodological approach, implementation process, and outcomes of this program.

Method

The community engagement program adopted a participatory and collaborative approach designed to ensure that the training activities directly addressed the real needs and constraints of MSME actors at Pringgondani Market. This methodological framework was informed by best practices in community service programs, where empowerment and co-creation between academics and local entrepreneurs are central to sustainable outcomes (Asiyah & Rachmadi, 2022; Nugroho & Susila, 2024). The program followed four interconnected stages: (1) needs assessment, (2) program preparation, (3) training implementation, and (4) evaluation and reflection. Each stage was structured to build continuity between data collection, intervention design, and capacity enhancement outcomes.

The first stage focused on identifying the specific challenges and training needs of MSME participants. Preliminary surveys, field observations, and informal interviews were conducted to map enterprise characteristics and constraints, including product types, packaging practices, sales channels, and digital literacy. This participatory diagnosis process ensured that the design of subsequent training modules was grounded in the context of local market realities (Agustina et al., 2021). Similar to other empowerment studies, needs assessment served as a foundation for tailoring digital and design training to participants' literacy levels and available resources (Asiyah & Rachmadi, 2022). Data collection emphasized participants' understanding of branding, product design, and digital marketing, providing critical insights for the contextual adaptation of learning materials (Octasyilva et al., 2020).



Based on the findings from the assessment of needs, the community service team developed a series of practical and contextual training modules designed to fit the daily routines of MSME owners. The module development process combined academic expertise and field collaboration—engaging ITK lecturers, students, and practitioners with experience in branding, packaging, and digital communication. This collaborative design process aligns with participatory learning models that emphasize the integration of theory and hands-on practice (Agustina et al., 2021). Preparatory activities included the identification of appropriate venues and schedules to ensure accessibility, the development of illustrated instructional materials, and coordination with local market management for logistical support. Learning media were designed to simplify technical content, reflecting community-service approaches that prioritize inclusivity and visual learning (Nugroho & Susila, 2024).

The implementation stage consisted of three workshops, each addressing a core competency area for strengthening MSME competitiveness:

1) Branding and Business Preparation Training.

Participants were introduced to branding fundamentals—clear brand identity, visual consistency, and storytelling techniques oriented toward customer engagement. They also learned basic business management topics such as cost calculation, pricing, and simple record-keeping (Asiyah & Rachmadi, 2022).

2) Product and Packaging Design Workshop.

The second workshop developed participants' ability to design functional and appealing packaging. Drawing from prior studies, packaging is understood as the “key of product” that conveys both information and aesthetic value (Octasyilva et al., 2020). Participants learned principles of color balance, typography, and sustainable material selection. Using simple digital tools, they redesigned or created product labels guided by facilitators. Similar approaches have proven effective in enhancing creativity and innovation among MSMEs in previous training programs (Agustina et al., 2021; Nugroho & Susila, 2024).

3) Social Media and Digital Marketing Workshop.

The final workshop aimed to build digital marketing skills using platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok—now central to MSME promotion in Indonesia (Asiyah & Rachmadi, 2022). Participants learned to set up business accounts, produce smartphone-based visual content, maintain consistent posting, and engage audiences effectively. Interactive facilitation methods such as demonstrations, peer mentoring, and group discussions were employed to strengthen learning outcomes. The involvement of ITK students as co-facilitators enhanced individual support, echoing the collaborative mentoring models recommended in community-based MSME empowerment programs.

All workshops were held on-site at Pringgondani Market, ensuring contextual relevance and fostering mutual learning between participants and facilitators. The final stage measured the effectiveness and perceived impact of the training. Evaluation employed post-training questionnaires, short interviews, and visual documentation of participants' products before and after training to identify improvements in branding and packaging design. Quantitative data from the pre-tests and post-tests as well as the structured questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, ranges, and distributions) and simple comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores, which were further visualized using boxplots to highlight changes in participants' performance. Qualitative data from open-ended questionnaire items, short interviews, and field notes were analyzed using content-based thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in participants' perceptions, challenges, and reported behavioral changes. This approach follows prior community-service evaluations that



used mixed qualitative-quantitative feedback to gauge learning and behavioral changes (Nugroho & Susila, 2024; Octasyilva et al., 2020). Reflection sessions were conducted jointly between facilitators and MSME representatives to discuss results, share experiences, and propose follow-up mentoring strategies. This participatory reflection ensured the continuity of learning and strengthened the local support network, consistent with participatory evaluation frameworks in community-engagement literature.

Result and Discussion

The community empowerment program conducted at Pringgondani Market successfully engaged local MSME actors through a sequence of structured workshops and mentoring sessions. The program involved 57 participants in first workshop and 43 participants in second and third workshop representing diverse business sectors, including culinary products, handicrafts, and traditional apparel. Across all stages, the activities demonstrated strong community participation and produced tangible improvements in branding literacy, product presentation, and digital readiness.

The initial phase of the program began with an introduction and coordination meeting involving market management, local MSME leaders, and representatives from Institut Teknologi Kalimantan (ITK). This stage-built trust and clarified shared objectives between facilitators and community members. Subsequent training sessions were held on-site at Pringgondani Market to maximize accessibility and contextual relevance. Attendance rates were high, and participants showed enthusiasm throughout the sessions, reflecting their willingness to learn and improve their business capacity.



Figure 1. Food Processing Training Documentation

Figure 1 presents documentation of the food processing and training activities conducted at the market. It also serves as evidence of the program's experiential and hands-on learning approach. The program's first workshop on branding and business preparation provided MSME actors with foundational knowledge on identifying target markets, formulating unique selling propositions, and designing simple yet meaningful brand identities. Through guided exercises, participants developed basic branding concepts—including logos, color palettes, and brand narratives—that reflect local cultural elements and product uniqueness. This activity helped participants understand how visual identity and consistent messaging could improve customer recognition and trust.

The second workshop, which focused on product and packaging design, enabled MSME owners to recognize the role of visual communication in influencing purchasing decisions. Before the intervention, most packaging designs were generic, lacked brand names, and contained minimal or unclear product information. During the workshop,



participants practiced basic design techniques using accessible digital tools and learned to apply color harmony, typography, and information hierarchy effectively. They also discussed practical issues such as material selection, cost efficiency, and sustainability considerations, echoing earlier findings that packaging can function as a “silent salesperson” that communicates product quality and brand positioning at the point of sale (Octasyilva et al., 2020; Lubis et al., 2025).

The training produced measurable improvements in product presentation. Visual documentation showed that redesigned packaging featured clearer labeling, more cohesive color schemes, and better legibility of essential product information such as product name, ingredients, expiry date, and contact details. Many participants began incorporating consistent brand names and simple logos on their packaging, enhancing professionalism and consumer confidence. These changes are consistent with previous studies indicating that improved packaging design can increase perceived value and help MSMEs differentiate their products in competitive markets (Agustina et al., 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2023).

In addition to the core branding and design components, the program introduced complementary training on food processing based on local resources, specifically pineapple and seaweed. This activity aimed at expanding participants’ product portfolios and demonstrate how value-added processing can increase profitability. Participants learned to produce pineapple-seaweed extract beverages, manage raw materials efficiently, and package finished products attractively. This initiative successfully stimulated creativity and innovation among MSMEs, who began considering diversification as a strategy for sustaining business growth.

Figure 2 documents both the product design workshop and social media training. It illustrates participants actively working on label designs, receiving one-on-one assistance, and using their smartphones or laptops to design packaging and create simple promotional content. This figure is relevant because it visually demonstrates the integration of design and digital skills within a single learning setting. It reinforces the finding that the program did not treat branding, packaging, and digital promotion as isolated topics, but as interconnected competencies that collectively shape product identity and market presence. Such integrated interventions are in line with recommendations from previous MSME empowerment programs, which highlight the importance of combining design thinking with digital literacy to strengthen competitiveness (Iskamto et al., 2024; Probohudono et al., 2025).



Figure 2. Product Design and Social Media Training Documentation



The food innovation session also served as a practical example of how local raw materials can be linked to branding concepts. Participants were encouraged to use storytelling techniques that connect their products to the origin of ingredients and traditional methods of preparation. This approach helps position local products within a broader narrative of authenticity, sustainability, and regional pride—factors that are increasingly appreciated in modern consumer behavior.

The final session addressed the use of digital platforms for business promotion. Prior to the training, only a small proportion of MSMEs maintained active social media accounts. Participants were guided to create business profiles on Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business, and to manage these accounts for product promotion. The facilitators emphasized practical aspects such as taking product photos under natural light, composing visually appealing layouts, and writing persuasive captions.

Following the training, participants reported a greater level of confidence in using social media for marketing. Several MSME owners began uploading product photos and engaging with customers online. The training also encouraged participants to integrate storytelling into their social media content to highlight authenticity and quality. These outcomes demonstrate that targeted digital literacy initiatives can reduce barriers to online participation and expand MSMEs' market reach at low cost.

Evaluation results derived from the pre- and post-test assessments, complemented by post-training questionnaires in the second and third workshops, demonstrated a substantial improvement in participants' knowledge and skills. As illustrated in Figure 3, the boxplot comparison between pre-test and post-test scores shows a clear increase in the central tendency and a reduction in score dispersion after the training. Quantitatively, the average score increased from 9.1 on the pre-test to 10.0 on the post-test. The upward shift of the median and the concentration of post-test scores near the maximum value indicate that participants not only improved but did so consistently as a group. This pattern supports the conclusion that the training content was effectively delivered and understood by most participants, which aligns with previous community-service evaluations that reported significant gains in MSME knowledge following structured, context-based training (Nugroho & Susila, 2024; Octasyilva et al., 2020).

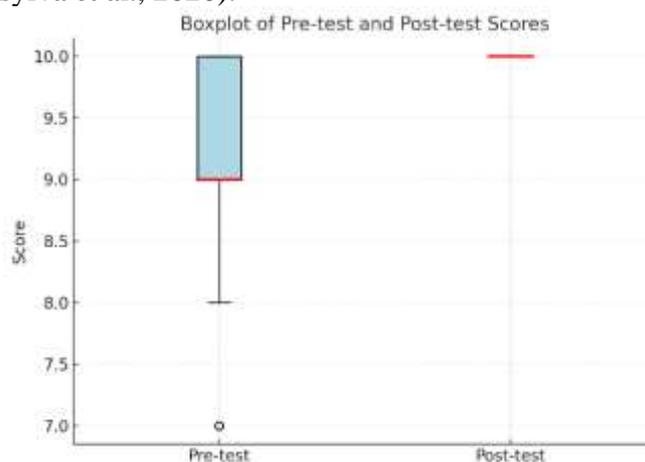


Figure 3. Boxplot Pre-test and Post-test of Participants

In terms of participant demographics, Figure 4 presents a pie chart showing the distribution of participants by sex. The majority were female (88%), while male participants accounted for 12% of the total. This demographic structure is typical for traditional markets



in Indonesia, where women often play a dominant role in micro and small-scale trading activities (Aliyah et al., 2017; Rahmawati et al., 2023). The strong participation of women suggests that the program contributes to strengthening women’s economic roles and supports broader gender-inclusive development agendas.

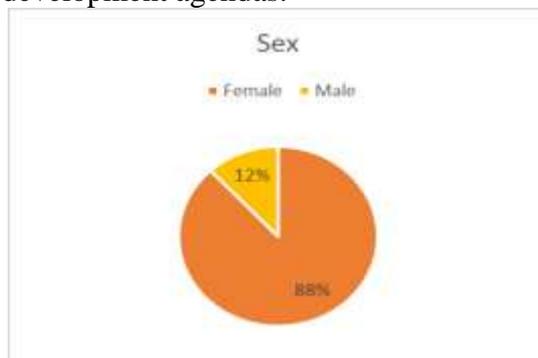


Figure 4. Pie Chart Sex of Participants

Figure 5 displays a histogram of participants’ ages, indicating that most participants were within the 38–47 age group, followed by those aged 29–38 and 47–56. This distribution shows that most participants are in productive age ranges but may not be “digital natives”, which partly explains the initial limitations in digital marketing skills observed during the needs assessment. At the same time, the active engagement of these age groups indicates that middle-aged entrepreneurs are highly responsive to digital and design training when materials are presented in accessible and context-relevant ways. These findings reinforce arguments in literature that age is not a strict barrier to digital adoption when training is tailored to learners’ experiences and learning styles (Iskamto et al., 2024).

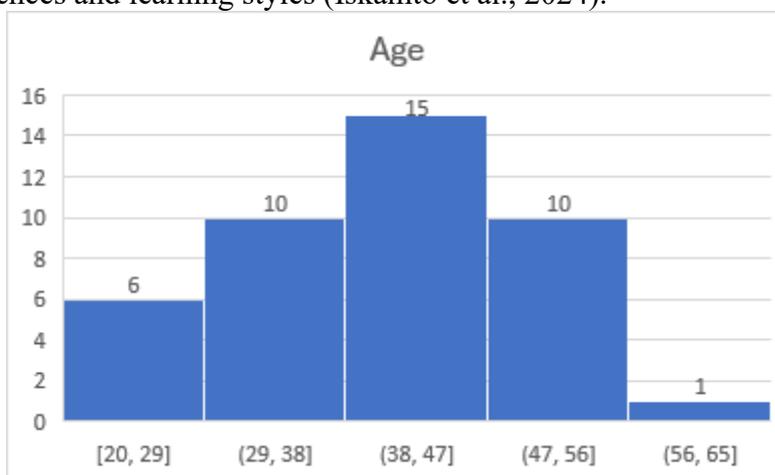


Figure 5. Histogram Age of Participants

Overall, participants rated the workshops as highly relevant and directly applicable to their business practices. Questionnaire responses and short interviews highlighted that the visual demonstrations and hands-on sessions were particularly helpful for understanding complex topics such as product design, branding, and digital marketing. Qualitative feedback confirmed that the program indirectly increased participants’ digital marketing knowledge and awareness of the importance of branding. Many participants reported implementing immediate changes in how they presented their products and engaged with customers. The inclusion of local examples and accessible digital tools was especially appreciated, as it



allowed MSMEs to connect theoretical insights to their everyday experiences, strengthening both learning retention and practical impact.

The findings of this program demonstrate that a context-specific and participatory training model can generate meaningful improvements in MSME capacity within a relatively short period. Quantitative evidence, particularly the increase in average scores from 9.1 (pre-test) to 10.0 (post-test) with a more concentrated distribution, indicates that knowledge on branding, packaging, and digital marketing was successfully transferred and understood quite uniformly among participants. These cognitive gains were reinforced by observable behavioural changes, such as clearer and more consistent brand identities, improved packaging designs, and more systematic use of social media for product promotion, suggesting that the intervention strengthened both conceptual understanding and practical skills.

When compared with prior studies, the results are broadly consistent but also add several nuances. Similar to several studies (Asiyah & Rachmadi, 2022; Nugroho & Susila, 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2023), this program confirms that targeted and context-based training can enhance MSME competitiveness in branding and digital marketing. However, it also extends the existing literature by integrating three key components—branding, product and packaging design, and digital marketing—into a single, coherent intervention situated within a traditional market setting. In addition, the explicit integration of cultural storytelling and local resource-based product innovation into branding strategies resonates with concepts of place-based and heritage-based branding (Aliyah et al., 2017; Wibawa et al., 2024), showing how local narratives and identity can be leveraged to differentiate MSME products and strengthen perceived authenticity.

Several factors appear to have contributed most strongly to participant improvement, including the participatory design of the program, the use of experiential and hands-on learning methods, the emphasis on cultural storytelling, and the focus on accessible digital tools such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business. The demographic profile—dominated by women in the 38–47 age group—also highlights the role of middle-aged female entrepreneurs as key actors in traditional markets and shows that, with supportive and context-relevant facilitation, this group can actively adopt digital marketing practices. Nonetheless, the discussion also acknowledges certain limitations, such as a potential ceiling effect in the post-test scores and the absence of long-term impact measurement, suggesting the need for more sensitive evaluation instruments and longitudinal follow-up using business and social media indicators. Overall, the program confirms and enriches the evidence that integrated, participatory, and locally grounded interventions can effectively enhance MSME capabilities while supporting broader agendas of digital inclusion and sustainable local economic development.

Conclusion

The results of this community service can be concluded that significant improvement in participants' understanding of branding principles, including the development of consistent visual identities and the articulation of unique product narratives. The workshops on packaging and design enabled MSME actors to produce clearer, more professional, and aesthetically appealing product labels, while also fostering creativity and innovation. The integration of food processing training using local ingredients, such as pineapple and seaweed, added practical value by demonstrating how local resources could be transformed into marketable products.



Furthermore, participants showed greater confidence in using social media platforms—such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business—to promote their products and engage with customers. These outcomes collectively illustrate that short-term, community-based interventions can yield tangible and sustainable improvements in MSME competitiveness when supported by structured mentoring and accessible digital tools. The collaboration between Institut Teknologi Kalimantan (ITK), local stakeholders, and MSME communities has not only strengthened entrepreneurial capacity but also contributed to the broader goal of sustainable and inclusive local economic development.

Recommendation

To ensure the continuity and long-term impact of this community empowerment program, it is recommended that MSME administrators (market managers and MSME association coordinators) institutionalize follow-up activities by organizing periodic training or mentoring clinics on branding, packaging design, and digital marketing; appointing a small coordinating team to assist members in updating product labels and managing social media; and developing simple monitoring indicators (such as the proportion of MSMEs with standardized packaging and active business accounts). At the same time, MSME members are encouraged to consistently apply the skills gained by maintaining clear and consistent brand identities on their products, allocating a small regular budget for packaging and digital promotion, implementing simple posting routines on social media, actively engaging in peer-learning groups facilitated by the association, and documenting basic business indicators (e.g., changes in sales volume or online inquiries) so that both administrators and members can jointly evaluate and refine their branding and digital marketing strategies over time.

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