



Enhancing digital marketing of MSMEs through comprehensive photography training in Hendrosari Village, Gresik

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ABSTRACT

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MSMEs in Hendrosari Village have been struggling with digital marketing due to a lack of expertise in creating compelling visual content, which has led to poor online visibility and stagnating sales. Additionally, these businesses face challenges in keeping up with ever-evolving digital trends, limited access to affordable digital tools, and insufficient training opportunities, further hampering their ability to compete in a growing online marketplace. An extensive photography training program was launched, aimed at equipping 15 MSMEs in Hendrosari Village, the target groups of this service initiative, with essential skills in lighting, composition, and post-processing techniques. This program aims to enhance their visual content creation capabilities, helping them improve their online presence and market competitiveness. The program combined theoretical lessons with hands-on practice, allowing participants to immediately apply what they learned. The community service team conducted observations and interviews before and after the training to assess changes in product photo quality and the impact on sales. The average photo quality assessment score increased from 3 to 4.5. In addition, some participants reported a 15 percent increase in income after learning new photography techniques. Based on the evaluation process, it shows that the photography training has strong potential to improve the competitiveness of MSMEs in Hendrosari village, which can inspire similar programs in other areas.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Hendrosari Village, Gresik Regency, play a vital role in the thriving community. As a tourist village with a focus on Edu Wisata Lontar Sewu, Hendrosari has undergone significant revitalization since 2020. This has encouraged the growth of local businesses. Despite this potential, MSMEs in Hendrosari face challenges in effectively utilizing the digital marketplace.

Leveraging social media platforms is crucial, as they offer valuable insights and opportunities to expand networks and gain a competitive edge (Jadhav et al., 2023; Setiyoko et al., 2023).

The digital landscape has fundamentally transformed the way businesses interact with consumers, necessitating a strong online presence for success. MSMEs, in particular, must effectively market their products online to compete (Ritz et al., 2019). The rise of e-commerce has provided rural businesses with unprecedented opportunities to reach a broader customer base, including urban and even international markets (Alexandra et al., 2024). In Indonesia, platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram have garnered significant user bases (Figure 1), emphasizing the need for MSMEs to increase their social media presence and drive sales.

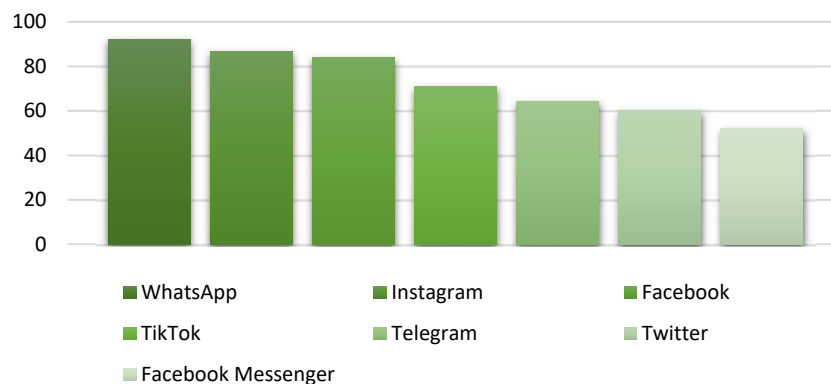


Figure 1. the social media platform most used by Indonesian people in 2022 (Source: databoks)

Social media platforms offer businesses a dynamic platform to promote business products and services to a vast audience (Amiri et al., 2023; Ismail, 2017; Kucharczuk et al., 2022; Rosário & Dias, 2023). This expanded reach can significantly boost sales and overall business growth. Beyond e-commerce, social media platforms have emerged as powerful marketing channels. Their integration into daily life (Alalwan et al., 2017; Rosário & Dias, 2023) has transformed communication, information sharing, and engagement (Kapoor et al., 2018). To capitalize on these digital opportunities, MSMEs in Hendrosari Village should develop a comprehensive digital marketing strategy that integrates e-commerce and social media platforms. By effectively utilizing these channels, local businesses can expand their customer base, increase sales, and improve their overall competitiveness in the market.

However, MSMEs in Hendrosari village suffer from a major obstacle, namely the lack of proficiency in creating high-quality visual content. This constraint is experienced by many MSMEs in rural areas (Setiowati et al., 2015). This aligns with research findings highlighting resource constraints hindering rural MSMEs' ability to create professional visuals (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015).

Results from a preliminary survey (Figure 2) conducted in Hendrosari show that out of 15 MSMEs surveyed, the majority lack the necessary knowledge and skills in product photography. This highlights the need for targeted training to improve their digital marketing efforts. The results of this survey indicate that most MSMEs in Hendrosari Village need specialized training in product photography to improve their ability to create high-quality visual content. 80 percent of the participants admitted to having insufficient basic knowledge of product photography. They had difficulty understanding basic concepts such as lighting and composition. 75 percent of participants were not familiar with the use of professional cameras such as DSLRs, and relied more on cell phone cameras to take product photos. Only 10 percent

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had used photo editing software to improve image quality. 70 percent of the participants stated that they rarely use product photography in their marketing strategy because they are not confident in the photos they take. Most of them (around 70 percent) felt that the product photos they produced were not attractive enough to catch customers' attention.

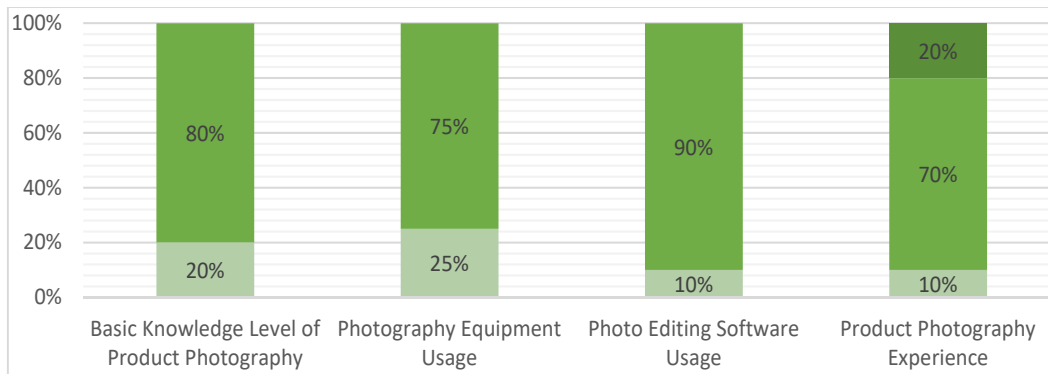


Figure 2. Preliminary survey result

The importance of visual content in the digital age cannot be overstated. Studies have shown that high-quality visual content plays a crucial role in capturing consumer attention and driving purchasing decisions (Jang & Kim, 2015; Teo et al., 2019). Compelling visuals are more captivating than text alone, making them essential for attracting customers in a competitive online environment (Townsend & Kahn, 2014). To address this challenge and empower MSMEs in Hendrosari, a comprehensive photography training program was implemented. This program aimed to equip MSMEs with the essential photography skills to produce professional-quality product images.

2. METHODS

Activity Plan and Action

Activity planning aims to create a program that is relevant and successful in improving the welfare of the local community. The team needs a thorough understanding of the conditions, economic potential and constraints faced by the target community. This is achieved through the first survey activity (Ridloah et al., 2024). To determine the needs, challenges, and current photography skills of MSME owners, surveys and interviews were conducted. The committee also looked at the products that participants sold and the online platforms they typically used to market their products. Finally, participants were chosen based on their willingness and readiness to participate in the training program.

The activity was attended by 15 MSMEs from Hendrosari Village. Activities were conducted out between February and May 2024. In line with the spectrum of actions that began in the pre-activity stage, including evaluating the area of Hendrosari Village and speaking directly with locals there, Hendrosari Village has Lontar Sewu edu tourism, which has a high potential for the growth of MSMEs. According to the findings of interviews with various MSMEs, they expressed a strong desire to begin studying photography in order to sell their existing MSME products more effectively online. The exercise was conducted out at Hendrosari Village Hall, making full use of available smartphones. The equipment and facilities used are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The equipment and facilities

Photography Equipment	
Smartphone with Camera Feature	: As an alternative for participants who do not have a professional camera
Camera	: Brought by the speaker for the practical session
Lighting	: Lighting during the training using natural light
Camera Lens	: A macro lens for close-ups or a wide-angle lens depending on the needs of product photography
Tripod	: For camera stability during shooting, especially for product shots
Reflector	: For adjusting lighting, reducing shadows, and adding shine to products
Laptop/PC	: For photo editing and presentation of training materials
Photo Backdrop/Background	: For product shots with a clean background
Training Facilities	
Training Room	: A room sufficient to accommodate participants with adequate lighting. In this case using the Village Hall
Projector and Screen	: For presentation of training materials and demonstration of photography techniques
Tables and Chairs	: For participant's comfort during the training session
Internet/Wi-Fi	: For access to online materials or photo editing applications

Implementation Methods

This community service activity uses three methods in its implementation: (1) Survey and questionnaire; (2) Training and workshop; and (3) Participatory evaluation. The survey and questionnaire methods are used to collect quantitative data from the community. Surveys can provide an overview of the needs, problems, and expectations of the community. The training and workshops held were product photo training to increase the capacity and skills of MSMEs in creating attractive visual content. Then, the trainees were involved in the program evaluation process by providing feedback and assessing the success of the program based on their own experience.

Implementation Stages

The photography training program for MSMEs in Hendrosari Gresik Village was organized into several key stages to ensure a structured and effective learning experience (Table 2). Each stage built on the previous one, gradually advancing participant's skills and understanding. The general framework of which is shown in Figure 3.

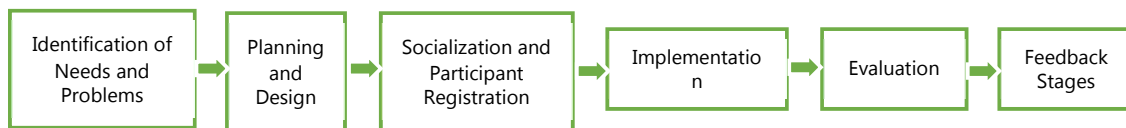


Figure 3. The implementation stages of MSMEs product photography training

Feedback Stages

In order to help participants improve their comprehension of the previously delivered content, the feedback stage is necessary. Feedback from participants can help the team to improve and enhance future empowerment programs (Ridloah et al., 2024).

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Table 2. The implementation stages and schedule of MSMEs product photography training

Step 1. Identification of Needs and Problems	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that the subsequent training program is well-targeted and effectively addresses the real issues faced by the community. - Ensures that the program's content is relevant, practical, and directly beneficial to the MSMEs, ultimately leading to improved product presentation and marketing outcomes.
Activity	- This stage begins by engaging MSME owners through surveys and interviews to gather insights on the issues and challenges they currently face.
Implementation Date	Second week of February 2024
Step 2. Planning and Design	
Objectives	- Designs the training materials and methods based on the problems identified. This includes selecting specific topics that suit the needs of the participants.
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community service team coordination meeting with subject matter expert (SME). - The team designs activities based on the results of coordination meetings.
Implementation Date	Third week of February 2024
Step 3. Socialization and Participant Registration	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introducing the program to MSMEs in Hendrosari Village, increasing their understanding of the program's objectives, benefits, and activities, and encouraging active participation. - At this stage, the community is expected to get clear information about the program, including the schedule, implementation methods, and the benefits they can take. - Effective socialization also helps build support and cooperation from all parties involved, so that the program can run smoothly and achieve the set objectives.
Activity	- Program Socialization and Participant Registration
Implementation Date	Fourth week of February 2024
Step 4. Implementation	
Objectives	- Provide participants with basic photography knowledge o increase engagement and sales of MSMEs
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program was implemented in the form of training and workshops, which consisted of theoretical and hands-on sessions. - In the theoretical session, participants received basic material about tools and equipment in product photography, camera settings, lighting, and composition. The speakers also discussed the importance of visual content in digital marketing. - In order for participants to comprehend the content and put it into practice right away, practical training is conducted. Participants in practical photography courses practice lighting setup, shot composition, and shot setup through hands-on exercises. The committee and presenter oversee the picture shoot and offer advice and suggestions in real time. Additionally, there is a Mini Studio Setup class that teaches participants how to use reasonably priced equipment to build up a little home studio. Following that, participants can try out different photographic styles and approaches to see which works best for their goods.
Implementation Date	March 3 rd , 2024

Step 5. Evaluation

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conducted to gauge participant level of understanding- The evaluation results provide an overview of the effectiveness of the activities conducted and the extent to which participants have improved their understanding and skills after attending the empowerment program
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A survey was conducted to find out how the participants felt about the various training exercises, from the delivery of the materials to the service of the organizers- The community service team implemented a robust support system using WhatsApp for social media monitoring and ongoing assistance.
Implementation Date	March - June 2024

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This product photo training directly addresses the challenges MSMEs in Hendrosari Village face. Most business owners recognize the need to learn how to create appealing photo content to boost their income through online marketing. The training began with a theoretical session that included basic material from the speaker, followed by practical sessions to enhance participant's understanding. Additionally, an evaluation process was conducted before and after the training to measure the effectiveness of the activity. Evaluation is critical in measuring the effectiveness of community empowerment programs, providing valuable feedback, and driving overall program quality improvement (Alexandra et al., 2024; Ridloah et al., 2024).

Theoretical session

This MSME product photography training focuses on two key components, provision and training. As shown in Figure 4, a presenting approach is used to conduct the briefing. The presentation covers essential photography techniques, including object clarity, lighting, supporting backgrounds, and other elements, to ensure the production of high-quality photo documentation.



Figure 4. Providing basic photography techniques

At this stage, the presentation provides a comprehensive overview of photography, including how to operate the equipment and supplies used during practice, as well as an explanation of the techniques to be applied when taking product shots. Throughout the presentation, examples of images commonly used for advertising products on social media and e-commerce are shared. This aims to equip participants with captivating product images they can use to market their own items.

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Figure 5. Training participants pay attention to the presenter's explanation

Practical session

Participants eagerly anticipate the practical session, where they get the opportunity to observe firsthand how to set up a basic studio, arrange photo objects (MSME products), and capture appealing images. During this session, attendees learn how to create captivating and relevant content that captures the attention of social media users and increases potential customer engagement in marketing exchanges and transactions.



Figure 6. The item that will be captured on camera

The participants' items were used as photo objects for the practical session. These items were collected and prepared by the committee, who assisted the presenter in setting up a basic studio and arranging the items for the hands-on session. Each participant's item was photographed, and the images were compiled into a single folder accessible to everyone. Additionally, attendees had the opportunity to take their own photos of the products arranged in the studio by the presenter.

Activity materials

This training's content is a fundamental photography course that has been modified to meet the needs of MSME participants looking to promote their goods online. This training material can be freely accessed by the participants through the Google Drive link (<https://bit.ly/MateriPelatihanFotoProduk>). The following topics are covered in the material: (1) Basic Concepts and Ideas; (2) Preparation; (3) Set up the Shooting; (4) Basic Angle and Composition; (5) Elements in Photo Composition; (6) Easy Tips for Product Photo Composition; (7) Natural Light; and (8) Examples of Concepts in Product Photography. The interactive slides are accompanied by illustrations and examples of images taken for product photography.

Table 3. Simple product photography material grid

Basic Concepts and Ideas	
Create concepts with 5W 1 H questions	What, Why, Who, Where, When, and How
Preparation	
Basic equipment consists of a camera and lens	- Participants can use a smartphone that is equipped with a camera feature.
Additional equipment	- Tripod, Model/Mannequin, Table, Background stand, Masking tape, scissors, Reflector, and Artificial light.
Property	- Consisting of equipment that is in direct contact with objects, such as plates, glasses, trays, cutting boards, napkins, etc.
Set up The Shooting	
Mini studio set up	- Setting up a table, picture mat, backdrop, and repositioning the camera or smartphone is a basic studio setup.
Composition and angle settings	- These settings adjust based on the kind of goods to be shot and the intended idea.
Basic Angle and Composition	
Angle	- The photographing angle that highlights the camera's position in a particular scenario when it is aimed at an item.
Composition	- A picture's harmonious unity of supporting parts achieved by strategically putting the composition to make it visually appealing
Elements in Photo Composition	
Line	- Consist of curved, diagonal, vertical, and horizontal lines.
Shape	- In patterns, lines, and dot forms
Texture	- Refers to the visual and tactile quality of a surface as it is perceived through an image.
Pattern	- Refer to the repetition of visual elements, such as shapes, lines, colors, or textures, within a composition.
Color	- Color composition in photography refers to the deliberate arrangement and use of colors in a photograph to create a visually appealing and effective image. It involves understanding how different colors interact with each other, the emotions they evoke, and how they can be used to draw attention to specific elements within the frame.
Framing	- Refers to the technique of using elements within the scene to create a "frame" around the subject.
Easy Tips for Product Photo Composition	
5 Tips	- Put the product in the center to make it the focal point. - Select an angle that works appropriately for the item. - Make use of negative space to draw focus. - Apply the "Rule of Odds" - Use the "Rule of Thirds"
Natural Light	
Tips and tricks for utilizing natural light	- Shooting at the Golden Hours - Observe the direction of the light. - Utilize instruments - Use appropriate base
Examples of Concepts in Product Photography	
Stuck on how to set up the composition and what idea to choose?	Simply apply the "Observe, Imitate, and Modify" method.

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Figure 7. Presenter and committee prepare materials and set up a simple studio

Follow-up support

After completing the photography training program for MSMEs in Hendrosari Village, the community service team established a strong support system through WhatsApp for social media monitoring and on-going assistance. This digital platform enabled continuous engagement and provided participants with easy access to consult with trainers and peers. This group is also a forum for MSMEs to promote each other's products and social media accounts such as RM Lesehan Berkah Ilaahi (Instagram @lesehanbi) and Buni Drinks (Instagram @minuman_buni).

Additional resources, such as tutorial videos, articles, and photography and editing tips, were shared in the group to reinforce learning. Participants and trainers exchanged best practices and successful examples of product photography, fostering a collaborative learning environment. The use of WhatsApp for post-training support, along with one-on-one practice during workshop sessions, was vital to the success of the photography training program. These elements ensured participants received continuous guidance, personalized feedback, and a supportive community, empowering them to enhance their product photography skills and strengthen their businesses in the digital marketplace.

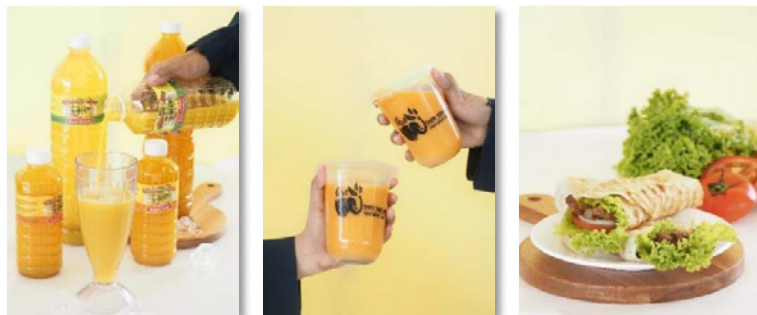


Figure 8. Several product photos from the hands-on session that participants in the training can download from Google Drive (<https://bit.ly/FotoProdukUMKMHendrosari>) as the event is over

Evaluation results

Prior to the training, 15 participants were asked to show the product photos that they usually use to promote their products. The community service team assessed and recorded the photos of each participant. After the training was completed, the participants were asked to practice the results of the training independently and were assessed again by the community service team. Figure 9 shows that all participants experienced an increase in their photo quality assessment score from 3.0 before the training

to 4.5 after the training. These results indicate that the photography training provided was effective in improving the participants' ability to produce high-quality product photos.

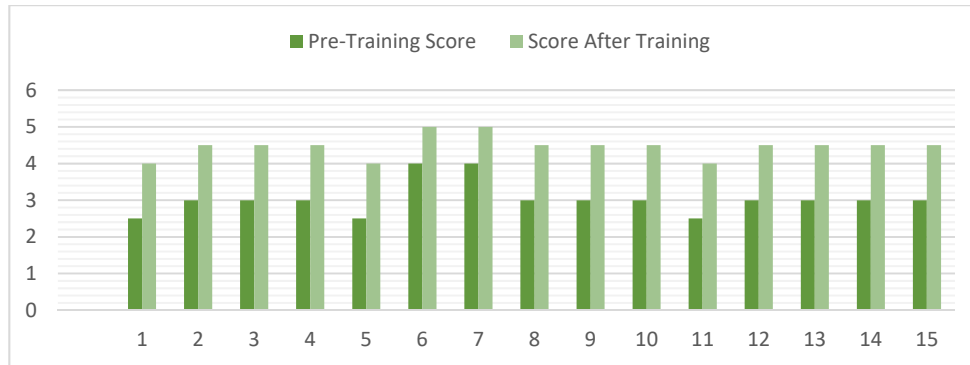


Figure 9. MSME photo product assessment before and after training

Following the photography training, the community service team tracked and documented the participant's sales figures using a WhatsApp group. This statistic included sales numbers for four months, from March to June 2024. Some participants reported a large 15 percent increase in profits. For example, a participant who previously earned IDR 3,000,000 per month was able to increase his earnings to IDR 3,450,000 by using the newly learned photography techniques. This illustrates that the training significantly raised the visual appeal of their products, resulting in higher total sales and profitability. This increase suggests that the photographic skills taught improved both the visual quality of the material and the participants' digital marketing performance.

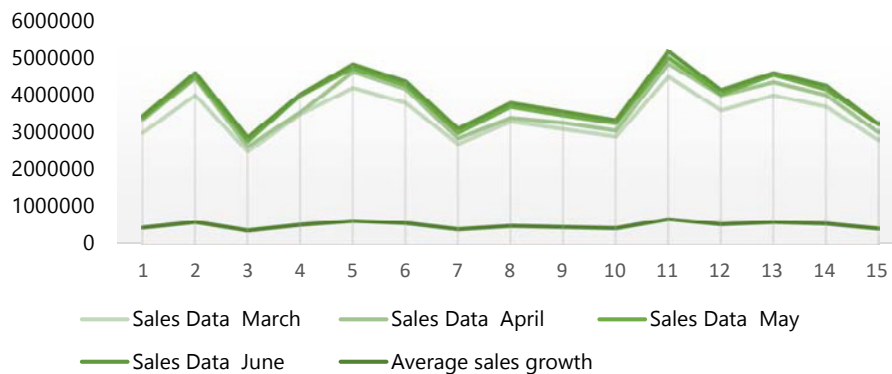


Figure 10. Income data of MSME product photography training participants

Discussion

The product photography training for MSMEs in Hendrosari Village significantly enhanced their digital marketing capabilities, demonstrating both immediate and sustained benefits. Participants exhibited a high level of enthusiasm, with many expressing a desire to continue refining their skills and applying the new techniques learned. This sustained interest suggests a lasting impact of the training on their business practices.

Comprehensive interpretation of results

The training provides a comprehensive approach, beginning with theoretical courses that established a solid basis in photographic fundamentals. Participants easily understood the theoretical topics because to the use of visual aids, presentations, and example images. Hands-on workshops followed, allowing participants to immediately apply what they had learned. This method guaranteed that the training was both instructive and practical, which is consistent with the program's goal of encouraging local entrepreneurs to better their digital marketing tactics through high-quality product photography.

When compared to other community service projects mentioned in various community service journals (Leiwakabessy et al., 2023; Widyo et al., 2023; Quenby & Ikaningtyas, 2023), the Hendrosari training program offers a very specific solution through comprehensive photography training, which focuses directly on improving technical skills that MSMEs can immediately apply to improve the quality of their digital marketing. It's designed to empower MSMEs in Hendrosari village, making a direct contribution to local economic development through the enhancement of relevant skills. The program also emphasizes the importance of photography in digital marketing. It offers a unique approach in the context of digital marketing training. The visual quality resulting from photography training can have a major impact on the effectiveness of MSME digital marketing.

Benefits and positive impacts

The benefits of the training were multifaceted. First and foremost, participants learned to create a consistent visual style for their product images, contributing to a stronger brand identity. This consistency is crucial for building consumer confidence and enhancing brand recall, which are essential components of successful digital marketing. By equipping the participants with these skills, the program aimed to expand their market reach and ultimately boost sales.

In addition to the direct business outcomes, the training also focused on skill development and empowerment. Participants acquired fundamental photographic techniques, including composition, lighting, and post-processing methods. While the training did not cover advanced editing techniques, participants were introduced to basic concepts that could significantly enhance the appeal and professionalism of their images. This focus on skill development is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability and independence of local entrepreneurs.

Impact on partners and community

The impact of the training on the participants was evident in the changes observed before and after the program. Initially, many participants struggled with basic photography techniques and lacked access to high-end equipment. However, by the end of the training, participants were able to create high-quality images using their smartphones and simple, cost-effective tools. The introduction of a smartphone photography module was particularly beneficial, as it allowed participants to utilize the full potential of their devices, thereby leveling the playing field and making professional-quality photography accessible to all.

The establishment of a dedicated WhatsApp group further enhanced the impact of the training. This platform provided ongoing support, enabling participants to continue learning and refining their skills after the formal training sessions had ended. The group also served as a space for discussing final photo and editing outcomes, sharing feedback, and identifying areas for further improvement. This ongoing engagement is a testament to the program's success in fostering a community of practice among the participants.

Challenges and areas for improvement

Despite the successes, the training program faced some challenges, particularly regarding the lack of access to advanced photography equipment. However, the program's focus on using smartphones and DIY solutions helped mitigate this issue. Future training sessions could further enhance participants' skills by incorporating more advanced editing techniques and providing additional resources on DIY lighting and backdrop setups.

In conclusion, the product photography training for MSMEs in Hendrosari Village has not only improved the digital marketing capabilities of the participants but has also contributed to the development of their technical skills, fostering greater independence and sustainability. The program's innovative approach to using accessible tools and providing ongoing support has set a new standard for similar community service initiatives.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The product photography training for MSMEs in Hendrosari Village has proven to be a significant initiative in enhancing the digital marketing capabilities of local entrepreneurs. The training provided participants with essential photography skills, enabling them to produce high-quality images that strengthen their brand identity and increase consumer engagement. By focusing on practical, accessible tools like smartphones, the program ensured that participants could immediately apply their new skills to improve their businesses, despite initial limitations in equipment. The sustained enthusiasm among participants and the establishment of a dedicated support group highlights the program's lasting impact on the community. Furthermore, the program not only contributed to the immediate business outcomes of the MSMEs but also empowered the participants by developing their technical skills and fostering greater independence. This holistic approach has set a benchmark for future community service initiatives, demonstrating that with the right guidance and resources, local entrepreneurs can significantly improve their market reach and business sustainability.

Based on the outcomes and insights gained from the product photography training for MSMEs in Hendrosari Village, several suggestions can be made to enhance the effectiveness and impact of future community service programs. These suggestions focus on building on the strengths of the current program, addressing any identified challenges, and expanding the scope to further support MSMEs. Suggestions for future programs: to expand on the program's success, future training should include modules on basic and intermediate picture editing methods, give access to more sophisticated equipment or DIY alternatives, and establish frequent follow-up sessions to assist participants hone their abilities. Encouraging participant involvement and spreading the program to other areas has the potential to double its effect. Regular monitoring and assessment will ensure that the program continues to satisfy the community's needs and goals.

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