

INCREASING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MSME BUSINESSES FROM NGO PERMAI, PENANG MALAYSIA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received : 3 April 2026

Revised : 2 Mei 2026

Accepted : 8 Mei 2026

Key words:

Business sustainability; brand awareness; digital content marketing; NGO PERMAI.

DOI: 10.62335

ABSTRACT

The urgency of the implementation of Community Service aims to open the insight of MSME entrepreneurs about the importance of consumers being aware of the existence of products and brands sold by marketers. In the midst of very tight business competition where the increase in digital marketing has made a lot of new entrepreneurs emerge. The number of new entrepreneurs who compete closely with existing entrepreneurs coupled with the declining purchasing power of the public certainly makes people more selective in buying a product. There is a tendency that consumers will choose products that are known both through the experience of using the product and based on information obtained through various sources. Consumers tend to buy products from well-known brands because they feel more comfortable and consider familiar brands to be more reliable, available, easier to find, and unquestionably quality. Therefore, well-known brands are more likely to be chosen by consumers than lesser-known brands. Brand awareness can be created by business actors by creating attractive digital marketing content so that consumers are aware of the existence of a product and brand. The goals and purpose of this community service activity is to provide introduction and also education to the public, especially those who have a business, that digital content marketing can increase brand awareness and support business sustainability. Based on our observation, the adaptation of the digital concept of content marketing and brand awareness carried out by MSMEs under the auspices of the NGO Indonesian Community Organization (PERMAI), Penang Malaysia has not been optimally implemented. The outputs of this research are publications in online media, activity videos, publications in ICCD journals, Posters and IPR.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed business competition patterns, particularly among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The expansion of digital platforms and social media has enabled new entrepreneurs to enter the market more easily, resulting in increasingly competitive business environments. In this context, consumers have become more selective in choosing products and services, especially

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amid declining purchasing power and the abundance of market alternatives. Consumers generally tend to prefer products from brands that are familiar, trustworthy, and easily recognized through digital exposure and previous experiences.

In the digital business ecosystem, brand awareness has become one of the most important factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to recognize and recall a particular brand either spontaneously or through certain stimuli. A strong brand awareness can increase consumer trust, strengthen market positioning, and improve business competitiveness. Previous studies have shown that businesses with higher brand awareness tend to achieve stronger customer loyalty and better market sustainability compared to businesses with weak brand recognition (Utama et al., 2023).

One strategic approach to strengthening brand awareness is through digital content marketing. Digital content marketing is defined as a marketing strategy that focuses on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and engage target consumers through digital media platforms. The use of digital content marketing through social media, short videos, online advertisements, and endorsement strategies has become increasingly important in supporting business growth and sustainability in the digital era (Muhammad Sulthan Rivansyah & Witjaksono, 2024). Effective digital content marketing not only enhances brand visibility but also encourages customer engagement and long-term business relationships.

For MSMEs, the implementation of digital marketing strategies remains a significant challenge, particularly for businesses with limited technological literacy and marketing capabilities. Many MSME actors still rely on conventional marketing methods and have not optimally utilized digital platforms to strengthen their branding strategies. As a result, their products often experience low market visibility and limited consumer recognition. This condition may hinder business sustainability, especially in highly competitive market environments. Branding and packaging strategies are therefore essential to improve MSME competitiveness and market recognition (Wulandari et al., 2023).

This issue is also experienced by MSME entrepreneurs under the guidance of the Indonesian Community Organization, *Pertubuhan Masyarakat Indonesia (PERMAI)*, in Penang, Malaysia. PERMAI is a non-governmental and non-political organization consisting of Indonesian citizens residing in Malaysia, particularly in Penang, Kedah, and Perlis. In addition to social and cultural activities, several members of PERMAI are involved in small-scale business activities to support their economic livelihoods. However, based on preliminary observations conducted by the service team, many MSME members still demonstrate limited understanding and implementation of digital content marketing strategies, particularly in building brand awareness through social media platforms. Similar findings were also identified in previous studies regarding the digital transformation challenges faced by Indonesian diaspora MSMEs in Penang (Hindardjo et al., 2025).

Considering these conditions, community service activities focusing on digital content marketing training are considered necessary to improve participants' understanding and practical skills in developing brand awareness strategies. Through this activity, MSME actors are expected to gain better knowledge regarding the importance of digital branding, content creation, and online consumer engagement as strategic efforts to maintain and improve business sustainability in the digital economy era. In addition, consumer trust, service quality, and customer engagement have been identified as important factors influencing business sustainability and customer retention in digital business environments (Purnawan et al., 2024).

Therefore, this community service activity aims to provide education and practical assistance for MSME entrepreneurs under NGO PERMAI Penang, Malaysia, in utilizing digital content marketing strategies to increase brand awareness and support sustainable business development.

METHOD

This community service activity employed a participatory educational approach through training and interactive discussions regarding digital content marketing strategies to increase brand awareness among MSME entrepreneurs under the NGO PERMAI in Penang, Malaysia. The activity aimed to improve participants' understanding and practical knowledge related to the use of digital marketing strategies to support business sustainability in the digital era.

The program entitled *“Increasing Brand Awareness Through Digital Content Marketing for the Sustainability of MSME Businesses from NGO PERMAI, Penang Malaysia”* was conducted on April 27, 2025, in Penang Island, Malaysia. The participants of this activity consisted of 33 MSME business owners affiliated with NGO PERMAI. The participants were Indonesian diaspora entrepreneurs engaged in various business sectors, including culinary businesses, fashion products, and small home industries. Most participants still relied on conventional marketing methods and had limited understanding regarding digital branding and content marketing strategies.

The implementation of the community service activity was carried out face-to-face and divided into several stages. The first stage involved preliminary observation and identification of problems faced by MSME actors, particularly related to digital marketing adaptation and brand awareness development. The second stage included the preparation of training materials related to digital content marketing, social media utilization, branding strategies, and business sustainability. The third stage was the implementation of educational workshops through lectures, interactive discussions, and question-and-answer sessions. The final stage consisted of evaluation and reflection activities to assess participants' understanding and responses toward the training materials.

The activity agenda consisted of the following sessions:

1. Opening session;
2. Presentation of materials related to digital content marketing and brand awareness strategies;
3. Interactive discussion and question-and-answer session;
4. Closing session.

The materials delivered during the activity emphasized the importance of understanding digital content marketing strategies in supporting business sustainability. Participants were introduced to the role of brand awareness in influencing consumer trust, purchasing decisions, and customer loyalty. In addition, the training also discussed the importance of understanding consumer needs through digital platforms to support production planning, business management decision-making, and marketing strategy development.

The evaluation of the activity was conducted using questionnaires distributed to participants after the training session. The evaluation instruments covered three main aspects, namely:

1. Participants' understanding of the training materials;
2. Evaluation of instructors' presentation and delivery methods;
3. Evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the activity.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively to determine participants' level of understanding and satisfaction after participating in the community service program. Figure 3 illustrates the stages of the community service implementation, beginning from problem identification, preparation of training materials, implementation of educational activities, and evaluation of participant responses and understanding.

Figure 1 illustrates the stages of the community service activity implementation, starting from problem identification, training preparation, implementation of educational activities, and evaluation of participant understanding.

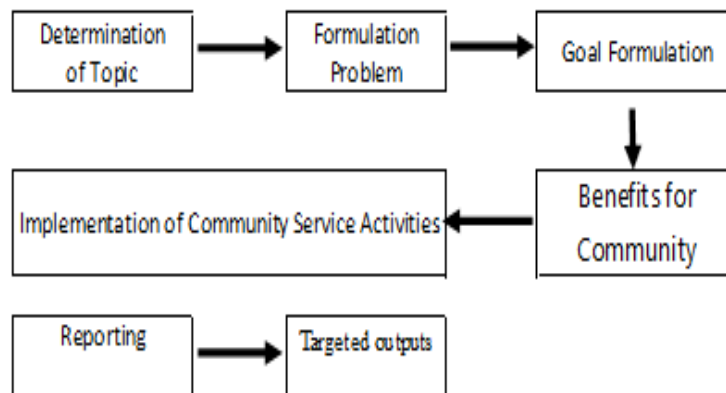


Figure 1. Stages of Community Service Activities

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activity Implementation Results

The community service program entitled *“Increasing Brand Awareness Through Digital Content Marketing for the Sustainability of MSME Businesses from NGO PERMAI, Penang Malaysia”* was successfully conducted on April 27, 2025, in Penang Island, Malaysia. The activity involved 33 MSME entrepreneurs affiliated with NGO PERMAI and was implemented through a hybrid workshop format combining direct presentations, interactive discussions, and practical sessions. The implementation of the activity proceeded smoothly and according to the predetermined schedule. Participants demonstrated high enthusiasm throughout the workshop activities, particularly during discussion and practical content creation sessions.

The activity was documented through photographs, attendance records, and video recordings as supporting evidence of program implementation. In addition, the PKM team distributed digital learning materials in the form of presentation slides and digital modules discussing branding strategies, social media optimization, and digital content marketing tools for MSMEs. The learning materials were designed to provide participants with practical understanding regarding the importance of brand awareness in supporting business sustainability in the digital era.

Stage 1: Introduction to Brand Awareness and Digital Content Marketing

The first stage of the activity focused on introducing the concept and importance of brand awareness for MSMEs in increasingly competitive business environments. The PKM team explained that digital branding has become an important strategy for increasing product visibility, strengthening customer engagement, and maintaining long-term business sustainability. Participants were introduced to various digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok as effective marketing channels for promoting products and interacting with consumers.

Several important topics were discussed during this stage, including:

1. The concept of digital branding and digital content marketing;
2. Strategies for building consistent brand identity across social media platforms;
3. Types of digital content, including educational content, promotional content, storytelling, and user-generated content;

4. Introduction to simple digital content creation applications such as Canva and CapCut;
5. The use of scheduling and analytics tools to optimize social media performance.

The delivery of these materials provided participants with new insights regarding the role of digital marketing in influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. The participants also gained a better understanding of how attractive and consistent digital content can strengthen consumer trust and brand recognition.

Stage 2: Practical Content Creation Activities

The second stage involved practical group activities in which participants created sample digital marketing content based on their own products and services. Participants were divided into several small groups to encourage collaboration and active discussion. During this session, participants practiced creating promotional captions, product visuals, and short-form content ideas suitable for social media platforms.

This practical activity became one of the most interactive sessions because participants were directly involved in designing branding strategies for their businesses. Several participants who previously had limited experience with digital marketing tools showed significant improvement in understanding the basics of visual branding and social media communication.

Stage 3: Feedback and Mentoring Session

After completing the content creation activities, participants received direct feedback from the PKM facilitators regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their digital content drafts. The facilitators provided suggestions related to visual consistency, caption writing, audience targeting, and content engagement strategies.

The mentoring process helped participants understand how to improve the quality of their digital marketing content and align it with consumer preferences. This stage also encouraged participants to become more confident in utilizing digital platforms to promote their businesses more professionally and consistently.

Stage 4: Evaluation Activities

The evaluation stage was conducted through questionnaires, oral feedback, and direct observation during the practical sessions. The evaluation results indicated positive outcomes from the implementation of the community service activity. Based on post-activity survey data:

- 88% of participants reported increased understanding regarding brand awareness and digital marketing strategies;
- 70% of participants successfully created or improved their business Instagram or Facebook pages during the workshop session;
- Several participants expressed commitment to developing weekly content plans and requested follow-up mentoring activities.

These findings indicate that the training activities successfully improved participants' awareness and understanding of the importance of digital branding in supporting business sustainability. The practical approach used during the workshop also contributed to improving participants' confidence in applying digital marketing strategies independently.

Discussion

The results of this community service activity demonstrate that digital content marketing training can effectively improve MSME participants' understanding and readiness to implement branding strategies through digital platforms. The improvement in participants' understanding is reflected in the high percentage of positive responses obtained from the evaluation questionnaires. This finding supports previous studies stating that brand awareness plays an important role in increasing consumer trust, customer loyalty, and business competitiveness in digital markets.

The practical workshop approach used in this activity proved effective because participants were directly involved in content creation practices rather than only receiving

theoretical explanations. Through hands-on activities, participants were able to understand how digital platforms can be utilized not only as promotional media but also as tools for building long-term relationships with consumers.

The activity also identified several challenges during implementation. Some older participants still experienced limitations in digital literacy and required more intensive guidance during practical sessions. In addition, language differences among participants required several training materials to be delivered bilingually in Bahasa Indonesia and English to ensure better understanding and communication effectiveness.

Despite these challenges, the overall implementation of the activity was considered successful. The collaborative support from NGO PERMAI Malaysia contributed significantly to the smooth execution of the program. The partnership between the university PKM team and PERMAI was formally supported through a collaboration agreement, which strengthened institutional cooperation in supporting community empowerment activities for Indonesian diaspora MSMEs in Malaysia.

Output Achievements

This community service activity produced several outputs, including:

1. Submission of final reports and activity documentation to the university;
2. Preparation of journal articles related to community service outcomes;
3. Publication materials for mass media and promotional posters;
4. PKM activity documentation videos;
5. Development of intellectual property rights (IPR)-based educational materials;
6. Digital distribution of a guidebook entitled "*Simple Digital Marketing for MSMEs*" to all participants;
7. Development of video tutorial materials related to Instagram Reels and TikTok marketing strategies for MSMEs;
8. Submission of a student article discussing the impact of digital content marketing on MSME visibility.

Overall, the activity successfully enhanced participants' knowledge and practical skills regarding digital content marketing and brand awareness strategies. The program is expected to contribute positively to improving the sustainability and competitiveness of MSME businesses affiliated with NGO PERMAI in Penang, Malaysia.



CONCLUSION

The community service program entitled “*Increasing Brand Awareness Through Digital Content Marketing for the Sustainability of MSME Businesses from NGO PERMAI, Penang Malaysia*” was successfully implemented and provided positive impacts on the participating MSME entrepreneurs. The activity contributed to improving participants’ understanding of the importance of brand awareness and digital content marketing strategies in supporting business sustainability in increasingly competitive digital markets.

Through educational workshops, practical content creation activities, and interactive discussions, participants gained both theoretical knowledge and practical experience in utilizing digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok for business promotion and customer engagement. The evaluation results demonstrated that most participants experienced increased understanding regarding digital branding and social media marketing strategies. In addition, several participants were able to improve or create social media business accounts and expressed commitment to implementing regular digital content planning for their businesses.

The implementation of practical and participatory learning methods proved effective in encouraging participant involvement and strengthening digital marketing skills among MSME actors. Despite several challenges related to digital literacy and language differences, the activity was conducted successfully through adaptive communication and bilingual material delivery.

Overall, this community service activity demonstrates that digital content marketing training can become an effective strategy for empowering MSMEs, particularly among Indonesian diaspora communities in Malaysia. Therefore, sustainable mentoring and follow-up programs are recommended to ensure the long-term implementation of digital branding strategies and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of MSME businesses in the digital economy era.

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