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Empowerment of Village MSMEs Through Social Media Training as a Strategy to Strengthen the Digital Economy

Muhammad Rizki Kurniawan[1], W. Sigit Rahardjo[2], Saefudin[3], Nana Sujana[4], Antonio Sarmento[5]
Politeknik Siber Cerdika Internasional, Indonesia
Corresponding Author: rizki71kurniawan@gmail.com, wrahardjo@polteksci.ac.i, donysae5@gmail.com, nana.janoel07@gmail.com, antoniosarmento093@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Village micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) increasingly have access to social media, yet low digital literacy keeps its use passive and detached from marketing. **Objective:** This study aims to identify the problems of social media use among MSMEs in Panambangan Village, Cirebon Regency, Indonesia, describe a Social Media Training intervention under the Research and Community Empowerment Program (PRISMA) 3.0, and analyze its initial implications for MSME digital readiness. **Method:** A qualitative descriptive case study involved nine purposively selected respondents: three village officials, three MSME actors (an *opak* artisan, a beekeeper, and a greenhouse farmer), and three villagers. Data from observation, semi-structured interviews, and a simple pre- and post-training survey (supporting data) were analyzed through data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing with source triangulation. **Results:** Before the training, social media served mainly personal communication without content planning. After the training, respondents reported better understanding of its business functions, readiness to produce simple promotional content, and more positive perceptions of digital market opportunities. Sales and engagement were not measured. **Conclusion:** Social media training is a relevant initial intervention for building the digital marketing readiness of village MSMEs, but continuous mentoring is required before broader digital-economic outcomes can be expected.

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the main pillars of the national economy and have a strategic role in creating jobs, increasing community income, and encouraging local economic growth, including in rural areas. Globally, MSMEs are also recognized as the main drivers of local economic development, especially in rural areas, due to their ability to absorb labor and utilize local resources adaptively (Tshikovhi et al., 2023; 2020).

In Indonesia, most MSMEs are located in villages and are based on local potential, such as processed food products, handicrafts, and household-scale services. However, rural MSMEs still face various structural challenges, especially limited market access, low marketing capacity, and lack of use of digital technology. A number of studies show that MSMEs in rural areas tend to experience obstacles in reaching a wider market due to limited infrastructure, information, and digital marketing capabilities (Rahayu & Day, 2017; Tiwasing et al., 2022).

This structural problem is reinforced by the digital divide, which is no longer determined solely by physical access to devices and the internet but increasingly by differences in skills and purposes of use (Lythreatis et al., 2022; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014). Evidence from Indonesian SMEs shows that the adoption of electronic commerce is shaped by perceived benefits, technological readiness, and the information technology ability of owner-managers (Rahayu & Day, 2017). Consequently, the global digital transformation agenda for small businesses (Omrani et al., 2024) does not automatically reach rural micro-enterprises.

The development of digital technology and the wider penetration of social media actually open up great opportunities for rural MSMEs to expand their market reach without having to rely on conventional marketing channels. Social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram have become relatively accessible and low-cost platforms for product promotion, even for micro-enterprises in rural areas that have limited marketing resources (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

A number of studies have shown that the use of social media can increase the visibility of MSME products, expand consumer networks, and increase the competitiveness of small businesses through direct communication with consumers and relatively low promotional costs (Abbasi et al., 2022; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Pratono et al., 2020; Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015; Tatik & Setiawan, 2025; Trinugroho et al., 2022). However, the availability of digital platforms is not automatically followed by the ability of MSME actors to use them strategically.

Ainin et al., (2015) demonstrated that social media use among SMEs is associated with better financial and non-financial performance, particularly through lower marketing costs and improved customer relations. Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015), however, found that small firms generally have not exploited the full potential of digital marketing channels, as their use tends to be unsystematic. More recent studies in developing economies, such as Chatterjee and Kar (2020) in India and Qalati et al.

(2022), confirmed that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, and technological-organizational-environmental factors determine social media adoption and its performance effects. Nevertheless, these studies predominantly surveyed established SMEs quantitatively and offer limited insight into how rural micro-entrepreneurs with low digital literacy move from passive, personal use toward initial readiness for digital marketing, and into the role of a short, practice-based training at that earliest stage.

In rural areas, the low digital literacy of MSME actors often causes social media to be used passively, limited to personal communication, without an understanding of content strategies, branding, and interaction with consumers. This condition reflects the gap between the potential of digital technology and the human resource capacity of MSME actors. Several studies have emphasized that digital literacy and mentoring are key factors in the successful adoption of digital marketing by MSMEs, especially in rural areas (Hasan et al., 2024; Pratono et al., 2020). The low level of digital literacy has implications for the limited ability of MSMEs to select, use, and manage digital technology productively (Omrani et al., 2024; Paul et al., 2025; Torres-González et al., 2023; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014).

This gap is visible in Panambangan Village, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency. Preliminary observations and initial interviews at the beginning of PRISMA 3.0 indicated that MSME actors already had access to digital devices and social media accounts, yet these accounts were used mainly for personal communication, without planned promotional content, a consistent product visual identity, or deliberate interaction with consumers. The village MSMEs also represent three distinct product characteristics: *opak* artisans producing processed local food that relies on visual appeal, beekeepers whose honey requires consumer trust in its quality, and greenhouse farmers marketing perishable horticultural products that require direct and timely communication with buyers. This variation makes the village an informative case for examining whether empowerment needs to be adapted to each type of business.

In this context, the Research and Community Empowerment Program (PRISMA) 3.0 is present as part of the implementation of the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) which encourages the involvement of students and universities in answering real problems in rural communities. One of the focuses of PRISMA 3.0 is the empowerment of the digital economy for MSMEs and local farmers. The Social Media Training activity for MSMEs held in Panambangan Village, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency was designed as a form of initial intervention to increase the digital capacity of village MSME actors.

Analytically, the training implemented within PRISMA 3.0 is positioned in this study as an external intervention that may influence the two core constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), namely perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which precede the intention to adopt a technology (Marangunić & Granić, 2015;

Venkatesh et al., 2012). The relevant question is therefore not whether a short program can immediately increase sales, but whether it can shift the understanding, perception, and readiness of village MSME actors as the first stage of adoption; without such a shift, available devices and platforms are unlikely to be used productively, which underlines the urgency of this study.

The novelty of this article lies in the integration of mapping the initial condition of village MSMEs with the implementation of social media training in a series of PRISMA 3.0 activities. This article not only maps the level of social media utilization by village MSMEs, but also shows how simple training-based interventions can increase the readiness of MSME actors to enter the digital economy ecosystem. Based on this background, this research is specifically directed to answer the problem of low social media utilization by village MSMEs through a training-based approach.

This study aims to identify the main problems of social media use by MSME actors in Panambangan Village, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency, to explain the intervention method in the form of Social Media Training for MSMEs within the framework of PRISMA 3.0, and to analyze the main findings and initial implications of the implementation of the training on the readiness of MSMEs to enter the digital economy ecosystem. Unlike previous studies that measured the determinants or performance outcomes of social media adoption among relatively established SMEs (Ainin et al., 2015; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Qalati et al., 2022), this study examines the pre-adoption stage among rural micro-entrepreneurs by combining baseline mapping, a contextual training intervention, and post-training evaluation across three different types of village businesses.

The training is not presumed to be effective; its outcomes are examined empirically and limited to understanding, perception, and readiness, as distinguished from marketing and economic outcomes. Theoretically, the study extends the application of TAM to rural micro-enterprises; practically, it offers a reference for village governments and universities in designing digital literacy programs that are adaptive to the characteristics of local MSMEs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researchers to explore in depth the actual conditions of village MSME actors, patterns of social media utilization, and responses to the training activities conducted. The case study focused on MSMEs in Panambangan Village, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency, as a representation of the rural context with local economic potential that was being directed toward digital transformation.

The research data sources included village officials, MSME actors, and members of the Panambangan Village community, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency. A total of nine respondents were selected using purposive sampling. The respondents consisted of three village officials, three MSME actors (an *opak* artisan, a beekeeper, and a greenhouse farmer), and three villagers. The respondent selection criteria included

micro- and small-scale business actors who were actively running their businesses and had or had previously used social media.

To maintain confidentiality, respondents were coded R1–R9 (Table 1). The three MSME actors were the primary participants of the training, whereas village officials and villagers provided contextual information on the village MSME environment and served as comparison sources for triangulation.

Table 1. Profile of respondents

Code	Respondent group	Description
R1–R3	Village officials	Members of the Panambangan Village government apparatus
R4	MSME actor	*Opak* artisan (processed local food)
R5	MSME actor	Beekeeper (honey products)
R6	MSME actor	Greenhouse farmer (fresh horticultural products)
R7–R9	Villagers	Members of the Panambangan Village community

Source: Research data, 2025–2026

Data were collected through direct observation of business activities and social media use, semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences and perceptions of MSME actors, and simple surveys to assess the level of social media utilization before and after the training. The research instruments included interview guidelines, observation sheets, and simple questionnaires related to digital literacy and social media marketing. The interview guide covered four dimensions: current patterns of social media use, perceived usefulness of social media for business, perceived difficulty or ease of use, and the intention to use social media for promotion.

The observation sheet recorded the platforms used, the type of account, the nature of uploaded content, the regularity of uploads, and interaction with consumers. The simple survey was administered to the same respondents before and after the training and covered four indicators: understanding of the business functions of social media, ability to create simple promotional content, knowledge of basic promotional strategies, and perception of digital market opportunities. Because of the small number of respondents, survey responses were summarized descriptively and compared between the two administrations without inferential statistical testing; the survey therefore served as supporting data for the qualitative findings rather than as a basis for generalization.

PRISMA 3.0 activities were carried out from December 22, 2025, to January 3, 2026. Social media training was conducted face-to-face using a hands-on approach, including an introduction to social media functions for MSMEs, simple content creation,

and basic promotional strategies. The research period covered the entire PRISMA 3.0 implementation and was organized into three stages. In the pre-intervention stage, observations, interviews, and the pre-training survey were conducted to map the initial conditions. In the post-intervention stage, the post-training survey, follow-up interviews, and observation of participants' practice were conducted to identify changes in understanding, perception, and readiness. Because all stages took place within the same program period, the evaluation captures short-term changes only.

Data were analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was maintained through source triangulation by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and simple surveys. In the data reduction stage, interview notes and observation records were coded according to the research objectives and the TAM constructs, namely usage patterns, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and readiness to use social media for promotion. The coded data were then displayed in a matrix comparing conditions before and after the training (Table 2), and conclusions were drawn from patterns that were consistent across data sources.

Source triangulation was conducted by comparing the statements of MSME actors with those of village officials and villagers, as well as with observation and survey results. Findings that converged across sources were treated as consistent, whereas discrepancies, such as expressed interest that was not yet reflected in observed practice, were reported as limitations rather than removed. The research was conducted with the permission of the Panambangan Village government as part of the PRISMA 3.0 program. Participation was voluntary, respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and gave their consent before the interviews and surveys, and their identities were anonymized in reporting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the study show that the main problem faced by MSMEs in Panambangan Village, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency is the low digital marketing literacy, which is reflected in the use of social media which is still limited to personal communication. Before the intervention, social media had not been used as a means of marketing products in a planned manner. Table 2 summarizes the conditions before and after the training based on observation, interviews, and the simple survey. In the pre-intervention stage, the three MSME actors had access to social media, but uploads were incidental, product content was not planned, and interaction with consumers was not used as a marketing activity. Interviews also revealed that digital marketing was perceived as complex and as requiring special skills, indicating low perceived ease of use.

Table 2. Conditions of MSME actors before and after the Social Media Training

Indicator	Before training	After training	Data source
Pattern of social media use	Mainly personal communication; incidental and unplanned uploads	Intention to use social media as a planned promotional channel	Observation, interview, survey
Understanding of the business functions of social media	Limited; digital marketing perceived as complex and requiring special skills	Better understanding of social media functions for product promotion	Interview, survey
Simple promotional content creation	No content planning; content not oriented toward marketing	Readiness to produce simple promotional content; awareness of product visuals	Observation of guided practice, survey
Perception of digital market opportunities	Low perceived usefulness and ease of use	More positive perception and interest in trying digital marketing	Interview, survey
Marketing and economic outcomes (reach, engagement, sales, income)	Not measured	Not measured within the study period	—

Source: Observation, semi-structured interviews, and simple pre- and post-training survey, processed by the authors (2026).

Through the intervention method in the form of Social Media Training for MSMEs, business actors are given a direct understanding and practice related to the function of social media, simple content creation, and basic promotional strategies. The main findings of the post-intervention show an increase in understanding, readiness, and interest of MSME actors to utilize social media as a promotional tool. The responses differed among the three types of MSMEs. After the training, the *opak* artisan (R4) recognized the importance of consistent uploads and a recognizable product visual identity for local food products. The beekeeper (R5) was directed to use educational narratives on product quality, the cultivation process, and the benefits of honey as

promotional material. The greenhouse farmer (R6) identified opportunities for visual-based marketing of fresh produce and for direct communication with consumers.

These findings indicate that social media training has initial implications in the form of changes in the perception and readiness of MSME actors in adopting digital marketing, although the impact is still short-term. The changes reported above refer to respondents' self-reported understanding and perception and to their readiness as observed during guided practice, whereas the interpretation that these changes represent the early stage of digital marketing adoption is the authors' analysis. Marketing and economic outcomes, such as reach, engagement, sales, or income, were not measured within the study period. Therefore, the results do not demonstrate a strengthening of the village digital economy, but rather the formation of its initial preconditions.

Discussion

The discussion is organized according to the three research objectives: the problems of social media use by village MSMEs, the relevance of the training intervention within PRISMA 3.0, and the initial implications of the training, followed by an analysis per type of MSME and its policy implications.

Analysis of Social Media Utilization Problems by Village MSMEs

The findings of the study show that the low use of social media by MSMEs in Panambangan Village, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency (*opak* artisans, beekeepers, and green house farmers) is not caused by the absence of tools or access to technology, but by limited digital literacy and marketing. Social media owned by MSME actors tends to be used personally and incidentally, without clear content planning and marketing objectives. This condition confirms the gap between the potential of digital technology and the capacity of village MSME human resources to use it productively. Without educational intervention, social media does not function as a tool to strengthen the economy, but only as a means of social communication.

This finding is consistent with Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015), who reported that small firms tend to use digital channels unsystematically, and with van Deursen and van Dijk (2014), who argued that the digital divide has shifted from access to differences in usage. In contrast to the respondents of Chatterjee and Kar (2020), who were SMEs that had already adopted social media marketing, the MSME actors in Panambangan Village were still at the pre-adoption stage, which explains why basic understanding, rather than advanced marketing strategy, emerged as their main need.

Social Media Socialization and Training Needs Analysis

The results of the interviews show that MSME actors have the perception that digital marketing is a complex activity and requires special skills. This perception is the main obstacle in the adoption of social media as a marketing strategy. Therefore, socialization and social media training are an urgent need as an initial intervention. Training serves to build a basic understanding, change negative perceptions of digital

technology, and increase the confidence of MSME actors in starting simple digital marketing practices that suit the character of their business.

Theoretical Analysis in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Framework

In the perspective of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the initial condition of village MSMEs reflects the low perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of social media as a business tool (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Marangunić & Granić, 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2012). The implementation of social media training in PRISMA 3.0 activities plays a direct role in improving both aspects through hands-on approaches and concrete examples, as shown in various recent studies that confirm that digital training and capacity building have a significant effect on the acceptance of technology and the marketing performance of MSMEs (Ainin et al., 2015; Estefan et al., 2024; Zahara et al., 2023).

Increasing MSME actors' understanding of the benefits of social media and its ease of use shows that socialization has a strategic function in encouraging the acceptance of digital technology at the village MSME level. These results support the argument of Chatterjee and Kar (2020) and Qalati et al. (2022) that perceived usefulness and ease of use are central to social media adoption among SMEs in developing countries. However, whereas those studies identified these factors through statistical associations, the present study illustrates qualitatively how a practice-based intervention can begin to shift these perceptions among micro-entrepreneurs who previously regarded digital marketing as too complex.

Analysis of the Suitability of the Intervention with the PRISMA 3.0 Context

In the context of PRISMA 3.0 which is carried out for a limited duration of 14 days, socialization and social media training are the most rational and proportionate forms of intervention. This program is not aimed at producing instant business transformation but rather builds an initial foundation in the form of awareness, basic knowledge, and readiness of MSME actors to enter the digital economy ecosystem. Thus, the implementation of social media training is in line with the goals of PRISMA as a research and community empowerment program based on real needs in the field.

Analysis of the Initial Impact and Implications of MSME Empowerment

The increase in understanding and readiness of MSME actors after the training showed a positive initial impact of socialization activities. This impact is reflected in the change in perception of social media as a promotional tool, increasing interest in trying digital marketing, and awareness of the importance of product visuals and communication with consumers. Although the resulting impact is still short-term, these findings indicate that social media socialization and training are important prerequisites before further assistance and more complex digital interventions are carried out. Therefore, the sustainability of mentoring programs is key in ensuring that the empowerment of village MSMEs can run consistently and sustainably.

In interpreting this impact, four levels of outcomes need to be distinguished: digital literacy outcomes (understanding of social media functions), adoption outcomes (intention and readiness to use social media for business), marketing outcomes (reach, engagement, and consumer response), and economic outcomes (sales and income). The evidence in this study is limited to the first two levels. Ainin et al., (2015) showed that performance outcomes emerge from actual and sustained social media use; thus, the marketing and economic outcomes of the training in Panambangan Village can only be expected if the initial readiness identified here is followed by continuous practice and mentoring.

Specific Analysis per Type of MSMEs and Socialization Strategies

Further analysis shows that the needs and potential for the use of social media are different for each type of MSME. In MSMEs that are *opak* artisans, social media has the potential to be used to highlight the uniqueness of local food products, production processes, and consumer testimonials through simple visual content. Social media training helps business actors understand the importance of consistency of uploads and product visual identity. In beekeeping MSMEs, social media has a strategic function in building consumer trust through education about product quality, cultivation processes, and the benefits of honey. Socialization plays a role in directing business actors to utilize educational narratives as part of digital marketing strategies.

Meanwhile, in MSMEs of greenhouse farmers, social media has the potential to be used to expand the marketing network of fresh agricultural products and show modern agricultural practices carried out. Social media training helps business actors understand the opportunities for visual-based marketing and direct communication with consumers. These differences in characteristics confirm that social media socialization needs to be adaptive and contextual according to the type of MSMEs. This approach strengthens the effectiveness of training as an instrument for empowering the village digital economy.

Policy Implications and Implementing Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the village government needs to make social media training part of a sustainable village MSME empowerment program. Universities can play a role as companion partners in strengthening the digital capacity of MSMEs through advanced programs, such as content creation assistance and digital marketing evaluation. The integration of MSME digital literacy programs with village policies is expected to accelerate the transformation of an inclusive digital economy based on local potential.

These recommendations follow directly from the findings. Because the observed changes were limited to understanding, perception, and readiness, and because digital marketing was initially perceived as complex, follow-up programs should emphasize continuous mentoring in content production and the evaluation of simple engagement indicators rather than one-off training. Because needs differed across the *opak*, honey,

and greenhouse businesses, mentoring materials should also be tailored to each type of product.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the main problem of MSMEs in Panambangan Village, Sedong District, Cirebon Regency, is low digital literacy, reflected in the passive use of social media for personal communication rather than marketing. Social Media Training within the PRISMA 3.0 framework, delivered through a hands-on approach, proved to be a relevant initial intervention for this context. After the training, MSME actors reported a better understanding of the business functions of social media, more positive perceptions of digital market opportunities, and readiness to produce simple promotional content, with needs differing across opak, honey, and greenhouse businesses. These changes are short-term and do not yet demonstrate marketing or economic outcomes. Village governments and universities are therefore recommended to provide continuous, product-specific mentoring, while future studies should measure engagement, sales, and income longitudinally.

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