

Training on Digital Marketing Strategies through Social Media at the Parish of St. Mary Immaculate Conception, Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Medan, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This training aims to provide the congregation of the Cathedral Church of the Archdiocese of Medan with a practical understanding of utilizing social media as a digital marketing tool. With the widespread use of Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business among the public, this training focuses on branding strategies, content creation, and effective digital promotion techniques for MSMEs. This activity is a collaboration between the Cathedral Church and the Information Technology & Management Study Program of IBBI University and was held on July 20, 2025, in the Van De Hurk Hall. The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' understanding of digital marketing and motivation to market products more professionally through social media platforms.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Media, SMEs, Churches, Online Marketing.

I. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 has brought significant changes across various sectors of life, including the fields of economics and marketing. The emergence of social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business, has transformed the way entrepreneurs promote their products and connect with consumers. These platforms have evolved beyond entertainment and communication tools to become effective, fast, and low-cost marketing channels, especially for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). However, the optimal utilization of social media as a business tool remains a challenge, particularly for entrepreneurs from grassroots communities such as church congregations. Limited digital literacy, a lack of understanding of digital branding strategies, and the absence of practical training are the main obstacles preventing them from adapting to modern marketing trends. In fact, MSMEs have great potential to strengthen local and household economies when supported by adequate digital knowledge and skills. As a form of social concern and academic responsibility, the Information Technology and Management Study Programs of IBBI University collaborated with the Parish of St. Mary Immaculate Conception, Cathedral of the

Archdiocese of Medan, to organize a community service program (PKM) titled "Digital Marketing Strategies through Social Media for Church Congregation MSMEs." This program focuses not only on the theoretical foundation of digital marketing but also on practical and applicable approaches that participants can directly implement. The training materials cover various topics, including strategies for building brand identity (branding), creating engaging visual content, writing promotional captions, determining effective posting times, and introducing business features on social media platforms such as Instagram Business, Facebook Page, and WhatsApp Catalog. The program also serves as a collaborative learning space for academics, practitioners, and church communities to create tangible impacts on community-based economic development through the use of technology. The main objectives of this program are to:

- a. Enhance participants' understanding of digital marketing concepts through social media.
- b. Provide practical skills in creating and managing business accounts on social media platforms.
- c. Encourage independence and sustainability of small businesses owned by church members through targeted digital marketing strategies.
- d. Strengthen synergy between higher education institutions and religious organizations in community empowerment.

Through this training, it is expected that church members who own or plan to start a business will gain the necessary knowledge and skills to compete in the digital market. Furthermore, this activity reflects the church's concrete role in supporting the welfare of its congregation through a contextual approach that aligns with contemporary challenges.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Digital Transformation in the Community Economy

Digital transformation refers to the process of integrating digital technology into all aspects of society, including the economic and business sectors. According to Westerman et al. (2014), digital transformation is not merely about adopting new technologies but also about how these technologies change the way organizations and individuals operate and create added value. In the context of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), digital transformation enables business actors to access broader markets, streamline business processes, and enhance product competitiveness through data-driven strategies.



Figure 1. Digital Marketing and Community Economy

2.2. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to a series of marketing activities that utilize digital media and the internet as the main tools to reach consumers. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) define digital marketing as the application of digital technologies that form distribution, communication, and service channels, enabling organizations to engage customers in a more effective marketing process. The main components of digital marketing include:

- a. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- b. Search Engine Marketing (SEM)
- c. Social Media Marketing (SMM)
- d. Email Marketing
- e. Content Marketing
Influencer Marketing

With the increasing penetration of the internet and mobile devices, digital marketing strategies have become essential tools for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to build brand awareness, increase sales, and maintain customer loyalty.



Figure 2. Digital Marketing

2.3. Social Media as a Marketing Platform

Social media has become a highly popular and effective tool in digital marketing. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media refers to a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business offer a range of business features—such as business accounts, analytics insights, advertising tools, and product catalogs—that significantly support business promotion. Social media offers several advantages over conventional media, including:

- a. Interactivity: Enables two-way communication between sellers and consumers.
- b. Low cost: Ideal for MSMEs with limited marketing budgets.
- c. Viral dissemination: Attractive content can spread quickly through sharing systems.
- d. Accurate audience segmentation: Advertising features allow businesses to target consumers based on location, age, interests, and behavior.

2.4. The Role of Branding in Social Media

Branding is the process of building a product's perception, image, and identity in the minds of consumers. In the digital era, branding is no longer limited to logos and slogans but also encompasses visual consistency, product storytelling, communication tone, and user experience on social media. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), strong branding helps foster customer loyalty, differentiate products from competitors, and increase product value. Within the context of this training program, participants were instructed on how to develop a compelling and relevant brand identity for social media users.

2.5. MSMEs and Their Potential in the Digital Economy

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of Indonesia's economy. According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2024), MSMEs contribute more than 60% to the national GDP and absorb approximately 97% of the workforce. Unfortunately, most MSMEs have not yet fully utilized digital technologies, including social media, as marketing tools. Digital marketing training serves as a strategic solution to enhance the digital literacy of MSME actors, enabling them to compete more effectively in the rapidly evolving digital ecosystem.

2.6. Training and Community Empowerment

Training is an essential component of community empowerment strategies, which involve enhancing the capabilities of individuals or groups to become self-reliant and further develop their skills. Sudjana (2009) emphasizes that practical training must be participatory, relevant to participants' needs, and applicable to daily life. In the context of the church, training is not only about economic development but also part of the church's social mission to improve the welfare of its congregation. By equipping church members with digital skills, the church actively contributes to building a productive and technologically literate community.

III. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to describe the process and impact of digital marketing strategy training conducted through social media for the community of the Parish of St. Mary Immaculate Conception, Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Medan. This method was chosen because it is suitable for exploring the meaning, experiences, and understanding of participants regarding the training they attended. The training was carried out using an interactive presentation method led by a competent instructor, Mr. Wilianto, S.T., S.Pd., M.M., M.TI, who delivered the material on digital marketing strategies through social media. After the presentation, participants were guided directly to practice the materials in real-time under the instructor's supervision. Each step was explained in detail, starting from installation and account setup to the implementation of marketing strategies on social media platforms.

3.1. Research Approach and Type

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing a case study method. This approach was used to describe and analyze the implementation of training activities in depth, as well as their impact on participants' understanding and skills in utilizing social media as a marketing tool for their businesses. The study is part of a Community Service Program (PKM) that emphasizes educational and transformational aspects. Therefore, the outcomes are presented in a narrative and contextual form, rather than relying solely on statistical measurements.

3.2. Research Subjects and Location

The subjects of this study were the training participants, consisting of active members of the Cathedral Parish of the Archdiocese of Medan, particularly those who own small businesses or plan to start one. A total of 85 participants from various parish communities took part in the program. The training was conducted at the Van De Hurk Hall, Cathedral Residence, Medan, chosen for its strategic location and familiarity to participants. The venue was equipped with necessary facilities, including a projector, internet connection, and sufficient practice space.

3.3. Training Design and Implementation Flow

The training activities were designed in three main stages, namely:

- a. Preparation Stage:
 - 1) Development of training modules by the lecturer team.
 - 2) Coordination with the parish regarding participants and logistics.
 - 3) Dissemination of information to the congregation through the church's social media and mass announcements.
- b. Implementation Stage:
 - 1) Interactive presentation by the instructor on digital marketing and the use of social media for business.
 - 2) Hands-on session for creating business accounts on Instagram and WhatsApp Business.
 - 3) Assistance in producing simple digital content for promotional purposes.
- c. Evaluation Stage:
 - 1) Observation of participants' behavior and engagement during the activity.
 - 2) Short interviews with selected participants.
 - 3) Distribution of questionnaires for participant feedback and reflection.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

The data in this study were collected through several techniques, namely:

- a. Direct observation, conducted throughout the training activities to record participant engagement, discussion dynamics, and interactions during the practice sessions.
- b. Informal interviews, carried out randomly with several participants to explore their understanding of the materials delivered and their perceptions of the benefits of the training.
- c. Documentation, including photos, videos, screenshots of social media accounts created during the training, and participant attendance lists.
- d. Short questionnaires, consisting of both open- and closed-ended questions to measure participants' levels of understanding, satisfaction, and intention to implement the training materials.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach through the following stages:

- a. Data reduction, which involved filtering and summarizing relevant data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation.
- b. Data presentation, presented in the form of narratives, tables, and visual documentation to describe the implementation process and outcomes of the activities.
- c. Conclusion drawing, based on patterns and tendencies emerging from field data, such as participants' understanding, active participation, and the initial impact observed after the training.

3.6. Data Validity

To maintain the validity and credibility of the findings, a data triangulation technique was employed by comparing and consolidating results from multiple data collection methods, including observation, interviews, and documentation. Additionally, feedback from participants and organizers was utilized as a cross-check mechanism to validate the researcher's interpretation.



Figure 3. Triangulation Technique for Data Validation

IV. Results and Discussion

The digital marketing strategy training, conducted through social media on July 20, 2025, at Van De Hurk Hall, Cathedral Residence, Medan, was successfully held and received enthusiastic responses from participants. This activity was part of the Community Service Program (PKM) organized by the Information Technology and Management Study Programs of IBBI University in collaboration with the Cathedral Parish of the Archdiocese of Medan.

4.1. Number and Profile of Participants

A total of 85 participants attended the training. Most were parishioners from ten parish communities, comprising small-scale MSME entrepreneurs, homemakers, and members of the youth ministry who had recently started their own businesses. Based on brief interviews:

- a. 65% of participants already owned small businesses producing homemade food, handicrafts, or clothing.
- b. 30% had business ideas and were interested in learning online marketing.
- c. 5% were community facilitators or parish administrators seeking to assist other church members.

4.2. Enthusiasm and Participation

Observations during the training revealed a high level of participation. Participants actively engaged in discussions, asked questions about suitable marketing strategies for their products, and shared challenges they encountered in promoting their businesses. The hands-on practice session was the most anticipated part of the training. Participants brought their smartphones and directly practiced:

- a. Creating Instagram Business Accounts.
- b. Setting up professional business profiles.
- c. Using the catalog and WhatsApp Business features.
- d. Developing product photo content and promotional captions.

Many participants took notes, captured presentation slides, and requested one-on-one assistance from the lecturer team and student volunteers.

4.3. Understanding of Materials and Practical Skills

Based on evaluations from questionnaires and short interviews:

- a. 90% of participants stated that they understood the basic concepts of digital marketing and the role of social media in business.
- b. 85% successfully created business accounts (Instagram and/or WhatsApp Business).
- c. 70% managed to upload at least one promotional post for their products.

Some participants also linked their accounts to product catalogs, indicating a deeper understanding. From interviews, participants expressed that they had just learned about the importance of visual branding, content consistency, and the use of relevant hashtags as part of an effective marketing strategy.

4.4. Challenges Encountered

Although the activity was successful, several technical and non-technical challenges were identified during implementation:

- a. Unstable internet connection in certain areas of the room occasionally disrupted the practice sessions.
- b. Some participants were unfamiliar with Instagram or did not have active email accounts, causing minor registration delays.
- c. Varying levels of digital literacy required additional assistance for several participants.

However, these challenges were effectively resolved through collaboration among the organizing committee, technical team, and facilitators.

4.5. Initial Impact and Follow-Up

The training produced positive initial impacts for the participants, including:

- Increased confidence in promoting their products online.
- A growing interest in learning more about digital marketing techniques.
- Several participants directly contacted the trainers for further consultation on using sponsored advertisements on social media.

As a follow-up, the church and PKM team plan to establish a WhatsApp mentoring group to support participants in developing their business accounts. Additionally, a second-phase training program is being considered, focusing on:

- Simple graphic design for social media (using Canva).
- Short video content strategies (Reels/TikTok).
- Paid promotion management (Instagram Ads and Facebook Ads).

4.6. Documentation of Activities

The training was comprehensively documented, including:

- Photos and videos of both seminar and hands-on practice sessions.
- Event flyers, presentation materials, and participants' uploaded content.
- Certificates of participation awarded to speakers and participants.

This documentation serves not only as an archive but also as evaluation material and evidence for reporting the PKM activities to the university.



Figure 4. Event Flyer



Figure 5. First Slide of the Presentation

Jenis-jenis Media Sosial untuk Pemasaran Digital



Figure 6. Types of Social Media for Digital Marketing



Figure 7. Photo of Certificate Presentation to the Speaker



Figure 8. Group Photo with Church Committee Members



Figure 9. PKM Team and Training Participants

V. Conclusion

The digital marketing strategy training, organized through social media by the Information Technology and Management Study Programs of IBBI University in collaboration with the Cathedral Parish of the Archdiocese of Medan, has successfully made a tangible contribution to the economic empowerment of parish communities. This training effectively bridged the digital literacy gap, which has long been a major obstacle to developing small-scale businesses among church members. Through an applicative and participatory approach, the program not only provided conceptual understanding of digital marketing but also encouraged participants to take concrete steps in starting and developing online product marketing through platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp Business. The high level of participation, the enthusiasm shown during practical sessions, and the direct outcomes—such as the creation of active business accounts and promotional content—demonstrate that the training was relevant, effective, and well-targeted. Beyond being a knowledge-transfer activity, this training also reinforced the church's role as an agent of social and economic transformation. The synergy between higher education institutions and religious organizations has created an empowering and inclusive learning space, fostering a new awareness that technology can be utilized positively and productively for the welfare of the community.

- Recommendations

Based on the findings and evaluations of the activity, several recommendations are proposed to ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of the program:

- a. Advanced and Specialized Training

Further training sessions should be conducted with more specific topics, such as:

1. Creating visual content using design applications (e.g., Canva, CapCut).
2. Marketing strategies through short video content (Reels, TikTok).
3. Managing paid advertisements on social media (Instagram Ads, Facebook Ads).

- b. Formation of a Digital Parish Community

It is recommended to establish a digital mentoring community within the parish, serving as a platform for shared learning, exchanging experiences, and providing online business consultations among members.

- c. Regular Monitoring and Evaluation

The program should not end with the initial training. Periodic monitoring should be conducted to assess participants' progress, including growth in business account followers, posting frequency, and the impact on sales performance.

- d. Sustained Collaboration

The collaboration between the university and the church should be continuously maintained and expanded. Similar programs could be implemented in other parish communities, involving students as digital volunteers in line with the Tri Dharma of Higher Education (education, research, and community service).

- e. Integration of PKM Materials into the Academic Curriculum

The materials, approaches, and outcomes of this training can be integrated into project-based learning courses within the Information Technology and Management study programs, thereby enhancing both academic value and social impact.

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