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MSME Empowerment through the Mukbang (Helping MSMEs Rise) Program: Case Study of Grandma Neng

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Abstrak
Program Mukbang yang dilaksanakan di Pasar Kertapati, Palembang, bertujuan untuk memberdayakan Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) dengan mengatasi tantangan penting dalam meningkatkan visibilitas produk melalui strategi *branding* dan pemasaran yang lebih efektif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif deskriptif yang melibatkan partisipasi Nenek Neng, salah satu pedagang tradisional, dalam program tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya perbaikan signifikan dalam daya tarik produk dan keterlibatan pelanggan, didorong oleh intervensi yang meliputi perbaikan kemasan, penyediaan material promosi, dan sesi pelatihan keterampilan. Meskipun hasil positif ini menyoroti keberhasilan pendekatan berbasis komunitas, penelitian ini juga mengakui adanya keterbatasan dalam hal generalisasi temuan, mengingat fokus yang terbatas pada satu kasus. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan perluasan program untuk melibatkan lebih banyak UMKM di berbagai lokasi dan penambahan pelatihan pemasaran digital dasar untuk meningkatkan adaptabilitas UMKM terhadap kebutuhan pasar yang berubah. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat berkontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas mengenai pemberdayaan UMKM dan pengembangan ekonomi di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Pemberdayaan UMKM; Pemasaran Digital; Program Mukbang.

Abstract
The Mukbang program implemented at Pasar Kertapati, Palembang, aims to empower Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by addressing key challenges in enhancing product visibility through more effective branding and marketing strategies. This study employs a qualitative descriptive case study approach, featuring the participation of Grandma Neng, a traditional vendor, in the program. The findings indicate significant improvements in product appeal and customer engagement, driven by interventions that included packaging enhancements, provision of promotional materials, and skills training sessions. While these positive results highlight the success of community-based approaches, the study also acknowledges limitations in terms of generalizability due to its focus on a single case. Future research is recommended to expand the program to include a broader range of MSMEs across different locations and to incorporate basic digital marketing training to enhance MSMEs' adaptability to changing market needs. These findings are expected to contribute to a broader discourse on MSME empowerment and economic development in Indonesia.

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Keywords: MSME Empowerment; Digital Marketing; Mukbang Program.

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Introduction

In the context of national and global economies, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a pivotal role in job creation, fostering innovation, and alleviating poverty. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), these enterprises serve as the backbone of economic development, significantly impacting employment and economic growth. (Saad et al., 2023). For instance, in Indonesia, MSMEs account for approximately 64 million businesses, contributing about 61.97% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Fridayani et al., 2024). Despite their importance, MSMEs face numerous challenges, particularly in accessing digital marketing and financial resources, which have been exacerbated by the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Sudarmo, 2021; Zaenuddin et al., 2023). The pandemic has not only strained supply chains but has also diminished market confidence, leading to lower financial flows and a decrease in operational flexibility. (Paul et al., 2021).

At the national level, Indonesia's MSME landscape has been marked by various government initiatives aimed at strengthening this sector amidst post-pandemic recovery. The National Economic Recovery Program (PEN) has been instrumental in providing support to MSMEs affected by the pandemic's economic backlash. (Marginingsih, 2021). However, significant issues continue to plague traditional or rural MSMEs, including limited digital literacy, inadequate branding, and market outreach (Atmojo et al., 2023). Specifically, these enterprises struggle to adapt to digital platforms necessary for modern marketing, which is essential for sustaining competitiveness and growth in an increasingly digitized economy (Hikmahwati & Sahla, 2022; Winarsih & Sakir, 2023).

The specific challenges faced by MSMEs underscore a crucial gap in existing frameworks addressing product visibility and marketing in the digital era. Community service programs can serve as a vital bridge between academic knowledge and the practical needs of local enterprises, empowering them by providing support in branding and digital marketing. (Fridayani et al., 2024; Subekti et al., 2023). Moreover, by harnessing community-based participatory approaches, these initiatives enable MSMEs to navigate the complexities of the digital market while fostering local economic empowerment. (Gufron & Nengsih, 2023).

In introducing the Mukbang program—designed to empower MSMEs through innovative community engagement—there is an emphasis on utilizing storytelling and digital platforms alongside mentoring. Such a model not only enhances product visibility but also encourages local entrepreneurs to collaborate effectively with academic institutions (Subekti et al., 2023). This novel approach aligns with existing literature highlighting the importance of community involvement in MSME development strategies, thereby promoting resilience and adaptability in the post-pandemic landscape. However, it is notable that a considerable body of research has predominantly focused on policy approaches rather than direct interventions through community engagement, underlying the need for further exploration into practical

case studies that demonstrate effective academic-community partnerships (Kumar & Gajakosh, 2021).

Thus, this study aims to document and analyze the implementation of the Mukbang program as a pioneering model of community engagement for MSME empowerment, contributing to the growing discourse on the intersection of academia and local economic development (Kumar & Gajakosh, 2021). By addressing the objective of enhancing MSME sustainability and growth, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this research plays a vital role in illuminating pathways for future MSME development strategies in Indonesia.

Metodologi

The methodology adopted in this study is grounded in a qualitative descriptive case study approach, which has been proven effective in capturing the nuanced processes of community empowerment, as demonstrated in related research (Walidain & Nurwulan, 2025). By situating the study at Pasar Kertapati in Palembang—an environment rich with traditional MSME activity—the research design ensures that interventions are evaluated in a realistic and dynamic setting, echoing the contextual strategies found in earlier qualitative investigations (Baharrudin et al., 2022). The population under study comprises local MSME vendors, with a purposively selected sample featuring Grandma Neng, whose participation is pivotal for representing community-centric empowerment outcomes, a method consistent with other case-based studies (Hidayah, 2025). The Mukbang program's intervention procedures are meticulously delineated: participants received business tools for enhanced product presentation and marketing materials, supplemented by tailored mentoring sessions aimed at refining food preparation and packaging techniques. Data collection was systematically conducted through observations, semi-structured interviews, and comprehensive field notes, which not only provided baseline and post-intervention comparisons but also enriched thematic analysis by uncovering recurring patterns of change in product quality, customer interaction, and vendor confidence. Analysis of the collected data followed a qualitative thematic approach, aligning findings within a broader framework of community empowerment and MSME development, mirroring methods utilized by similar research in community-based interventions (Haryoko et al., 2020; Sugiyono, 2019). Ethical considerations were stringently observed through obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and facilitating participant validation of findings, thereby reinforcing the transparency and rigor of the research approach (Hidayah, 2025; Walidain & Nurwulan, 2025).

Results and Discussions

The implementation of the Mukbang program at Pasar Kertapati, Palembang, was meticulously designed to address the foundational challenges faced by local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly Grandma Neng's traditional food stall. Prior to the intervention, baseline conditions highlighted a stark reality characterized by limited product appeal, negligible promotional materials, and an overarching dependence on outdated operational methods that lacked digital adaptation (Wijaya et al., 2023). The packaging quality of Grandma Neng's products was minimal, and her stall setup was rudimentary, which significantly impeded customer attraction and engagement. This scenario resonates with existing literature that emphasizes the crucial need for MSMEs to evolve through better branding and innovative marketing solutions in a rapidly changing economic environment (Dima et al., 2023). The lack of awareness regarding contemporary marketing techniques, including social media and digital tools, further compounded her challenges, underscoring the urgency for tailored support interventions designed to enhance competitiveness (Dima et al., 2023).

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To address these foundational challenges, the Mukbang program introduced a series of transformative empowerment activities. These included distributing essential business tools such as modern food display equipment and improved packaging materials, which were pivotal in elevating the aesthetic quality of Grandma Neng's offerings Dhar et al., 2024). Additionally, the creation and installation of vibrant banners were executed to enhance market visibility, effectively targeting potential customers walking through the bustling environment of Pasar Kertapati. Importantly, the program featured mentoring sessions focused on product enhancement, specifically training in the preparation and marketing of innovative products, such as trendy donuts (donat kekinian), designed to resonate with contemporary consumer preferences (Dima et al., 2023). This participatory approach, wherein Grandma Neng actively engaged in both the design and implementation processes, ensured that interventions were relevant and fostered a sense of ownership and accountability towards her business improvement (Wijaya et al., 2023).

Post-intervention assessments revealed significant and quantifiable changes within Grandma Neng's stall and overall business experience. Observations indicated a notable improvement in product aesthetics, with the upgraded packaging and cleaner displays visibly attracting increased customer attention (Wijaya et al., 2023). Interview responses from Grandma Neng showcased an enhancement in her self-confidence and entrepreneurial spirit, reflecting a profound transformation in her approach to business operations and customer interactions. The interplay between these interventions and Grandma Neng's personal development paralleled findings in prior studies, where participant engagement in empowerment programs resulted in heightened business performance and increased market presence (Dima et al., 2023). Furthermore, visual documentation, including before-and-after photographs, provided compelling evidence of the impact the Mukbang program had on her stall's appeal and operational dynamics.

The thematic analysis of the empowerment outcomes identified several key themes that emerged from the program's implementation. The first theme focused on product quality improvement, highlighting the critical role of enhanced packaging and food presentation in elevating customer perception (Latifah et al., 2020). Another significant theme was market visibility enhancement, evidenced by a marked increase in walk-in customers catalyzed by the attractive new displays and improved promotional strategies (Santos et al., 2022) . This was coupled with personal capacity building, where Grandma Neng's newfound knowledge of marketing strategies, including the use of social media for promotion, empowered her to better engage with the customer base (Dhar et al., 2024). Supporting quotes from interviews strongly reflected the positive shift in her mindset towards entrepreneurship and customer relations, corroborating the qualitative outcomes observed (Dhar et al., 2024).

Despite the program's successes, several challenges were encountered during implementation that merit discussion. Initially, there was a noticeable resistance to changing traditional selling habits, particularly in adopting new marketing techniques and digital tools (Bai et al., 2021). Additionally, Grandma Neng's previous lack of exposure to marketing principles posed a barrier to fully capitalizing on the training provided (Dima et al., 2023). However, these challenges were systematically addressed through continuous mentoring and reinforcement of the training sessions, which helped bridge the gap between theory and practical application. Overall, the iterative process of overcoming these barriers facilitated a

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deeper understanding and appreciation of modern business practices among the participants (Wijaya et al., 2023).

The findings from the Mukbang program carry critical implications, both practically and theoretically. Practically, the success of integrating simple tool provision with skill mentoring highlights a potentially replicable model for empowering traditional MSMEs across similar market settings (Wijaya et al., 2023). This aligns with calls from the literature for community-based participatory approaches that engage local stakeholders in processes of economic development and resilience (Dima et al., 2023). The theoretical implications suggest the necessity for policy frameworks that support the integration of capacity-building initiatives tailored to the unique dynamics of each locality, thereby promoting sustainable growth and poverty alleviation (Santoso, 2020; , Dhar et al., 2024).

In light of the study's limitations, such as the singular focus on a case study which may constrain generalizability, future recommendations propose scaling the intervention to encompass multiple MSMEs across different locations, thereby enhancing the robustness and applicability of the findings (Wahyudin & Hidayat, 2023). Furthermore, incorporating basic digital marketing training in follow-up programs can strengthen the ability of MSMEs to adapt to evolving market needs, aligning their operations more closely with contemporary consumer behavior and preferences (Dima et al., 2023). Such strategic expansions will not only enhance the program's effectiveness but also contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse surrounding MSME empowerment and economic resilience in Indonesia.



Picture 1. Documentation Process



Picture 2. Documentation Process

Conclusion

The Mukbang program implemented at Pasar Kertapati serves as a valuable case study that underscores the vital role of community engagement in empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) like Grandma Neng's traditional food stall in Palembang. The findings illustrate the program's effectiveness in addressing key challenges faced by local MSMEs, particularly in enhancing product visibility through improved branding and marketing strategies. Notable improvements were observed in product aesthetics and customer engagement, driven by targeted interventions that included modern packaging, promotional materials, and skill development sessions. Such advancements highlight the profound impact of community-based participatory approaches in fostering resilience and adaptability among MSMEs in the context of post-pandemic recovery.

However, the study is not without its limitations. The singular focus on a single case study may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. While the successful outcomes observed in Grandma Neng's food stall provide insights into the efficacy of the Mukbang program, additional research encompassing a wider array of MSMEs across diverse settings is necessary to strengthen the robustness of these conclusions. Moreover, challenges encountered during the implementation, such as resistance to change and limited prior exposure to modern marketing practices among participants, suggest that continuous support and iterative learning are essential components of capacity building.

In light of these limitations, future research should consider expanding the Mukbang initiative to include multiple MSMEs across various regions, thereby allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of its impact. Additionally, integrating basic digital marketing training into follow-up programs could significantly enhance MSMEs' ability to navigate the evolving market landscape and better align their operations with contemporary consumer preferences. These strategic recommendations not only seek to enhance the effectiveness of the Mukbang program but also contribute meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue regarding MSME empowerment, economic development, and poverty alleviation in Indonesia, ultimately fostering a sustainable ecosystem for local enterprises.

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