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Training for MSMEs on Leveraging Social Media for Online Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This service bridges the significant disparity between the vast potential of the digital market and the inadequate digital literacy skills prevalent among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The primary challenge confronting SMEs is their incapacity to convert social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, from simple communication tools into potent sales mechanisms, resulting in a competitive disadvantage against more agile commercial entities. This program aims to provide practical training and direct support to help SMEs improve their skills in creating, planning, and analyzing marketing content that works well with digital platform algorithms. This program's innovation is in the Content-to-Commerce (C2C) Model, which integrates engaging visual content with direct connectivity to WhatsApp Business and marketplaces, alongside an emphasis on straightforward metric analysis. The results showed that during the mentorship period, SME accounts had a 45% boost in engagement, a 30% growth in followers, and a notable 20% rise in sales conversions.

Keywords: Small and Medium Enterprises; Social Media; Digital Marketing; Digital Proficiency.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become imperative in the commercial realm, propelled by shifts in customer behavior predominantly influenced by online activities. Social media has evolved from merely an entertainment platform to a central hub for commerce and information dissemination. The adoption of online marketing via social media is crucial for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to achieve market sustainability and expansion, due to its very low cost compared to traditional marketing methods (Lopitf, 2023). Small and medium-sized

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enterprises, being the foundation of the economy, depend significantly on their capacity to engage audiences effectively in the digital realm.

Despite their heightened awareness of social media's significance, numerous SMEs face constraints due to limited resources (time, effort, and finances) and a lack of strategic understanding (Sutikno et al., 2023). Typically, SMEs engage in casual posting, replicate trends without modification, or concentrate on aggressive marketing rather than fostering conversation. This strategy fails to leverage the platform's algorithm effectively and does not cultivate enduring relationships with prospective customers, thus rendering their online marketing initiatives unproductive (Nademi & Shirzadi, 2024).

A significant disparity exists between the accessibility of social media platforms and the strategic proficiency of SMEs in utilizing them. This gap encompasses three primary aspects: (a) Content Creation: the incapacity to generate high-quality, trend-relevant product imagery and videos; (b) Algorithm Comprehension: insufficient understanding of optimal posting times, strategic hashtag utilization, and algorithmic functionality (e.g., Reels or TikTok For You Page); and (c) Conversion Integration: the failure to connect social media platforms with sales channels (e.g., directing traffic from Instagram to WhatsApp Business or marketplaces) (Seropi, 2023). This disparity hinders the conversion of likes into sales.

This service program introduces the Content-to-Commerce (C2C) Model, which emphasizes the ultimate objective of sales to address this gap. The C2C concept highlights the integration of engaging visual material (the material pillar) with a fluid transaction process (the commerce pillar). This program teaches participants how to post effectively while encouraging them to think like content creators and analysts: identifying a Unique Selling Proposition (USP), creating relevant stories, and developing a clear and measurable Call to Action (CTA). This method guarantees that theoretical information is effectively converted into practical actions that yield income.

This service program, based on innovation theory, aims to (a) help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) better understand social media marketing strategies on the three main platforms, (b) improve the visual quality of their content and enhance their writing skills, and (c) support SMEs in creating a connected system between social media and sales platforms to

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increase conversion rates. It is anticipated that following this program, partner SMEs will attain independence in handling their digital marketing.

RESEARCH ELABORATIONS

The service activity was conducted over four months at the center for processed food and handicraft SMEs in Z Regency, engaging 30 SMEs. The employed methodology is Participatory Action Research (PAR), founded on four stages of intervention.

Phase 1: Assessment and Strategy Development (Month 1) Pre-tests were administered to assess the digital literacy score and the status of the partner's SME social media profiles, including follower count, initial engagement rate, and posting frequency. The diagnostic results are utilized to modify the C2C Model curriculum to align with the particular requirements of SMEs.

Phase 2: Intensive Training for C2C Model (Month 2) Practical training is categorized into two primary sessions:

Content Sessions: Fundamental instruction in mobile photography and product videography, persuasive copywriting methodologies, and viral content trend analysis (TikTok/Reels).

Conversion Sessions: Integration of social media with WhatsApp Business (catalog development and automated responses), together with the interpretation of basic data (reach and engagement).

Phase 3: Mentorship and Execution (Month 3) The service team provides on-site group mentoring (one mentoring team for every five SMEs) to guarantee the constant implementation of the C2C Model. The emphasis of mentoring is on the regularity of weekly posts and the evaluation of performance.

Phase 4: Assessment and Documentation (Month 4) Post-test and quantitative data gathering from account metrics (engagement rate, followers) alongside qualitative data (sales conversion interviews) were executed to assess program outcomes and impact.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Initial findings indicate a substantial enhancement in the visual quality of content generated by SMEs. Prior to the intervention, 90% of SMEs utilized product images characterized by inadequate lighting and incongruous backgrounds. Upon completion of C2C training, all SMEs are capable of generating a minimum of 10 product photographs/videos of professional quality utilizing mobile devices. Enhancing visual quality is the primary factor in augmenting engagement rates. Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the quality of photographs of partner SMEs prior to and during the training.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of SME Product Photography Quality: Pre- and Post-Content Creation Training

Aspects	Product Images Prior to training.	Product Images Post-training.
Illumination	Dim, dependent on standard room illumination.	Illumination, utilizing natural light (sunlight) or a basic ring light.
Context	<i>Disordered kitchen or workbench backdrop</i>	<i>Utilize a plain background, minimalist elements, or an appropriate theme for a clean presentation.</i>
Concentration and determination.	You should not overlook the product.	Concentrate intently on product specifics, such as food texture or craftsmanship.

The execution of content planning and algorithmic comprehension directly influences account metrics. Table 1 delineates the average enhancement in account performance of 30 partner SMEs over the 4-week mentorship duration. The most significant rise was observed in engagement rate, suggesting that more pertinent and interactive content—utilizing question stickers, polls, and calls to action in captions—effectively engaged the audience's attention.

Table 1: Average Enhancement in Performance of SME Social Media Accounts

Measurement	Pre-Training (Mean)	Post-Training (Mean)	Proportional Augmentation
Engagement Ratio	1.8%	2.6%	45%
Follower Count	450	585	30%
<i>Achieve Weekly</i>	1,200	1,980	65%

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Weekly Posting Frequency	3	5	66%
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The efficacy of the C2C model is demonstrated by the enhancement of the conversion process. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are instructed to consistently incorporate a direct link to WhatsApp Business in every biography and swipe-up narrative, contingent upon feature availability. The integration of the product catalog in WA Business and the implementation of the auto-reply feature enhance the efficiency and professionalism of responding to customer requests. This substantially reduces wait times, a critical element in online purchasing decisions.

The major effect is heightened conversions. Comprehensive interviews with a sample of 10 SMEs revealed that the average sales conversion derived from social media rose by 20%. Table 2 presents example conversion statistics from several SMEs prior to and subsequent to the initiative. The rise in conversions is mostly attributable to heightened traffic and improved customer service quality via WA Business.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Weekly Average Sales Conversions from Social Media)

Sample of SME	Category of Product	Prior to Conversions (Mean Transaction)	Post-Conversion (Mean Transaction)	Increased (%)
Small and Medium-sized Enterprise A	Pastries	7	10	42.8%
Small and Medium-sized Enterprise B	Artisanal crafts	4	5	25.0%
Small and Medium-sized Enterprise C	Catering services	15	17	13.3%
Small and Medium Enterprises D	Apparel	10	12	20.0%

The primary problem encountered is sustaining post consistency and adjusting to swift algorithm modifications. The accomplished solution was the establishment of the "SME Z

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Content Community," a digital support group designed to share content ideas and maintain motivation. The program's durability is indicated by the partnership with KKN students to provide ongoing technical assistance, enabling SMEs to continually enhance their C2C model.

CONCLUSIONS

The service initiative "SME Debriefing Training in Utilizing Social Media as Online Marketing" effectively addressed the SME digital literacy gap via an innovative Content-to-Commerce (C2C) Model. The program's effectiveness is defined by (1) enhancement of visual content quality and efficient posting techniques, (2) a 45% average increase in engagement rate, and (3) a 20% rise in average sales conversions. The C2C model's innovation has effectively transformed SMEs' social media from a mere information platform into a productive sales channel, hence enhancing their competitiveness in the online market.

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