

WORKSHOP ON PRODUCT BRANDING STRATEGIES AND ONLINE CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR MSMEs IN MESUJI REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in driving economic growth and improving community welfare in Mesuji Regency. However, many MSME entrepreneurs still face challenges in developing strong product brands and providing effective online customer service. Limited knowledge of branding strategies and digital customer relationship management often reduces their competitiveness in an increasingly digital marketplace. Therefore, a community service program entitled "Workshop on Product Branding Strategies and Online Customer Service for MSMEs in Mesuji Regency" was conducted to enhance the capacity of MSME entrepreneurs in building brand identity and improving customer satisfaction through digital platforms.

The workshop was implemented through training sessions, discussions, practical exercises, mentoring, and evaluation activities. The materials covered product branding concepts, brand identity development, brand positioning, customer service excellence, online communication strategies, customer relationship management, and the utilization of digital platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Facebook, Instagram, and online marketplaces. Interactive learning methods were employed to ensure active participation and practical understanding among participants.

The results showed that participants gained a better understanding of the importance of branding and online customer service in business development. Participants were able to identify their brand values, develop branding strategies, improve customer communication skills, and apply customer service techniques through digital channels. The workshop also increased participants' awareness of the role of customer satisfaction and brand consistency in strengthening business competitiveness.

In conclusion, the workshop successfully improved participants' knowledge and practical skills related to product branding and online customer service. The program is expected to support MSMEs in enhancing brand recognition, increasing customer loyalty, expanding market opportunities, and achieving sustainable business growth.

Keywords: *Product Branding, Online Customer Service, MSMEs, Digital Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, Community Service.*

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are among the most important contributors to economic growth, employment generation, and community welfare in Indonesia. MSMEs play a strategic role in supporting local economies by creating business opportunities and increasing household income. In Mesuji Regency, MSMEs operate in various sectors, including culinary businesses, agriculture, handicrafts, retail trade, and home industries, making significant contributions to regional economic development.

The rapid advancement of digital technology and increasing market competition have changed the way businesses interact with consumers. Today, customers are not only concerned with product quality and price but also pay close attention to brand identity, customer experience, and service quality. As a result, MSMEs are required to develop strong branding strategies and provide excellent customer service to remain competitive in the digital marketplace.

Product branding is a crucial element in business development because it helps create a unique identity that distinguishes a product from its competitors. Effective branding enables businesses

to build customer trust, strengthen brand recognition, and increase customer loyalty. A strong brand can influence purchasing decisions and create long-term relationships between businesses and consumers. However, many MSME entrepreneurs still have limited understanding of branding concepts and often focus only on product sales without developing a clear brand identity.

In addition to branding, customer service has become a key factor in determining business success. The increasing use of digital platforms such as social media, messaging applications, and online marketplaces has transformed customer interactions. Consumers expect fast responses, accurate information, and professional service when communicating with businesses online. Therefore, the ability to provide effective online customer service is essential for maintaining customer satisfaction and encouraging repeat purchases.

Despite the growing importance of branding and online customer service, many MSME entrepreneurs in Mesuji Regency continue to face challenges in these areas. Some businesses have not yet developed logos, brand identities, or consistent promotional messages. Others experience difficulties in managing customer inquiries, responding to complaints, and maintaining communication through digital platforms. These challenges often limit their ability to compete effectively and expand their market reach.

Several studies have shown that effective branding and high-quality customer service contribute significantly to business performance. Strong branding helps businesses establish market differentiation, while excellent customer service increases customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Furthermore, digital communication technologies provide opportunities for businesses to interact directly with customers and strengthen customer relationships more efficiently.

Considering these conditions, a community service program entitled "Workshop on Product Branding Strategies and Online Customer Service for MSMEs in Mesuji Regency" was conducted. The program aimed to improve participants' understanding and practical skills in developing product branding strategies and delivering effective online customer service. Through training, discussions, practical exercises, and mentoring activities, participants were introduced to branding concepts, customer relationship management, digital communication techniques, and customer service best practices.

This program is expected to enhance the capacity of MSME entrepreneurs to build strong brands, improve customer satisfaction, strengthen business competitiveness, and support sustainable business growth. Ultimately, the workshop contributes to the empowerment of MSMEs and the economic development of Mesuji Regency in the digital era.

METHODS

The implementation method of this Community Service Program (PKM) was designed to improve the knowledge and practical skills of MSME entrepreneurs in Mesuji Regency regarding product branding strategies and online customer service. The program aimed to strengthen participants' ability to build strong brand identities, enhance customer relationships, and improve business competitiveness in the digital era.

The implementation of the program was carried out through four main stages: preparation, workshop implementation, mentoring, and evaluation. A participatory approach was adopted to ensure active involvement of participants throughout the program.

1. Preparation Stage

The preparation stage was conducted to identify the needs and challenges faced by MSME entrepreneurs in relation to product branding and online customer service. The implementation team carried out observations, interviews, and discussions with MSME owners to gather information regarding their branding practices, customer service methods, and digital marketing activities.

Based on the results of the needs assessment, the team prepared training materials tailored to the participants' business conditions. The workshop materials included product branding concepts, brand identity development, brand positioning, customer relationship management, online communication strategies, customer service excellence, and the utilization of digital communication platforms.

Furthermore, coordination was conducted with local stakeholders regarding participant recruitment, workshop schedules, venues, facilities, and supporting resources. Training modules, presentation materials, case studies, practical exercises, and evaluation instruments were also prepared.

Participant Involvement in the Preparation Stage

Participants contributed by:

- a) Providing information regarding business conditions and marketing challenges.
- b) Identifying branding and customer service issues within their businesses.
- c) Registering and confirming participation in the workshop.
- d) Coordinating with the organizing team regarding workshop requirements.

2. Workshop Implementation Stage

The workshop implementation stage represented the core activity of the community service program. The workshop employed lectures, discussions, case studies, demonstrations, and practical exercises to provide participants with both theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

The workshop materials included:

- a) Introduction to product branding and its importance for business growth.
- b) Development of brand identity, including logos, slogans, and brand values.
- c) Brand positioning and differentiation strategies.
- d) Customer service excellence and customer satisfaction management.
- e) Effective online communication through social media and messaging platforms.
- f) Customer complaint handling and relationship management strategies.
- g) Best practices for maintaining customer loyalty in digital environments.

During the practical sessions, participants analyzed their existing branding strategies, identified areas for improvement, developed brand concepts, and practiced responding to customer inquiries and complaints through online communication channels.

Participant Involvement in the Workshop Stage

Participants actively:

- a) Attended all workshop sessions.
- b) Participated in discussions and case study analyses.
- c) Practiced developing branding strategies for their businesses.
- d) Simulated online customer service interactions.
- e) Shared experiences and challenges related to customer management.

3. Mentoring Stage

Following the workshop, mentoring activities were conducted to support participants in applying the knowledge and skills acquired during the training. Mentoring was provided through direct consultation sessions and digital communication platforms such as WhatsApp groups.

The implementation team offered guidance on brand development, content consistency, customer communication techniques, and customer relationship management practices. Participants received feedback on their branding initiatives and customer service approaches to ensure effective implementation.

The mentoring stage aimed to strengthen participants' confidence and encourage the sustainable application of branding and customer service strategies in their business operations.

Participant Involvement in the Mentoring Stage

Participants were expected to:

- a) Apply branding and customer service strategies within their businesses.
- b) Consult with mentors regarding implementation challenges.
- c) Improve customer communication practices.

d) Continuously refine their brand identity and customer engagement activities.

4. Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the workshop and measure improvements in participants' understanding and practical skills. Evaluation methods included observations, discussions, participant feedback, and assessments conducted before and after the workshop.

The evaluation indicators included:

- a) Understanding of branding concepts and strategies.
- b) Ability to develop and communicate a clear brand identity.
- c) Ability to provide effective online customer service.
- d) Improvement in customer communication skills.
- e) Participant satisfaction with the workshop activities.
- f) Willingness to implement branding and customer service strategies in business operations.

The evaluation results were used to identify program achievements and formulate recommendations for future community service activities.

Participant Involvement in the Evaluation Stage

Participants contributed by:

- a) Completing evaluation forms and assessments.
- b) Presenting branding strategies developed during the workshop.
- c) Demonstrating customer service communication skills.
- d) Providing feedback and suggestions for future programs.

5. Participatory Approach

This community service program employed a participatory approach that actively involved MSME entrepreneurs throughout all stages of the activity, from problem identification and workshop implementation to mentoring and evaluation. This approach ensured that the program addressed actual business needs and provided practical solutions that could be directly applied by participants.

Through a systematic and participatory implementation process, the workshop was expected to enhance participants' branding capabilities, improve customer service quality, strengthen customer loyalty, increase business competitiveness, and contribute to the sustainable growth of MSMEs in Mesuji Regency.

Approach Method

The community service program entitled "**Workshop on Product Branding Strategies and Online Customer Service for MSMEs in Mesuji Regency**" adopted a **participatory, educational, and mentoring approach**. These approaches were designed to ensure that participants actively engaged in the learning process and were able to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the workshop to their business operations.

1. Participatory Approach

The participatory approach involved MSME entrepreneurs in every stage of the program, including problem identification, workshop implementation, mentoring, and evaluation. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences, business challenges, and customer service practices. This approach enabled the facilitators to tailor the training materials to the actual needs of the participants and fostered active learning through discussion and collaboration.

2. Educational Approach

The educational approach focused on increasing participants' knowledge and understanding of product branding and online customer service. Through lectures, presentations, case studies, and group discussions, participants were introduced to key concepts such as brand identity, brand positioning, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, digital communication, and customer relationship management. This approach helped participants understand the strategic importance of branding and customer service in achieving business success.

3. Practical Approach

A practical approach was applied through hands-on exercises and simulations. Participants were guided in developing branding strategies, identifying brand values, creating business slogans, and designing customer service scenarios. They also practiced responding to customer inquiries, handling complaints, and communicating professionally through online platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Facebook, and Instagram. This approach allowed participants to gain direct experience and improve their confidence in applying branding and customer service techniques.

4. Mentoring Approach

Following the workshop sessions, a mentoring approach was implemented to support participants in applying the knowledge and skills gained from the training. Mentoring was conducted through direct consultation and online communication channels. Participants received guidance on improving brand consistency, strengthening customer relationships, and solving challenges encountered during implementation. Continuous mentoring ensured that the learning outcomes could be sustained beyond the workshop period.

5. Problem-Solving Approach

The program also employed a problem-solving approach by identifying specific challenges faced by MSMEs regarding branding and customer service. Participants worked together with facilitators to analyze business problems and develop practical solutions that could be implemented within their respective enterprises. This approach encouraged critical thinking and helped participants address real business issues effectively.

By integrating participatory, educational, practical, mentoring, and problem-solving approaches, the program aimed to improve the branding capabilities and customer service competencies of MSME entrepreneurs in Mesuji Regency. These approaches were expected to contribute to stronger brand recognition, improved customer satisfaction, increased customer loyalty, and sustainable business growth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The community service program entitled “Workshop on Product Branding Strategies and Online Customer Service for MSMEs in Mesuji Regency” was successfully implemented with the participation of MSME entrepreneurs from various business sectors, including culinary businesses, retail trade, agriculture, handicrafts, and home industries. The workshop aimed to improve participants’ understanding and practical skills in developing effective branding strategies and providing high-quality online customer service.

Based on the preliminary assessment conducted before the workshop, it was found that most participants had limited knowledge of branding concepts and customer relationship management. Many MSME owners focused primarily on product sales and paid little attention to developing a distinctive brand identity. In addition, online customer service practices were generally informal and lacked consistency, resulting in limited customer engagement and retention.

During the workshop, participants received training on brand identity development, brand positioning, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and effective digital communication. Interactive learning methods, including presentations, group discussions, case studies, and practical exercises, enabled participants to gain both theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

The workshop activities generated strong enthusiasm among participants. They actively engaged in discussions, shared business experiences, and participated in branding and customer service simulations. Most participants successfully identified their brand values, developed branding concepts, created business slogans, and formulated strategies to improve customer communication.

Following the workshop, participants demonstrated a greater understanding of the importance of branding in creating business differentiation and building customer trust. They also showed improved skills in handling customer inquiries, responding to complaints, and maintaining professional communication through digital platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Facebook, and Instagram.

The mentoring sessions further strengthened participants’ ability to implement the concepts learned during the workshop. Several participants began applying branding elements such as logos, consistent visual identities, and standardized customer communication practices within their businesses. These improvements reflected the

positive impact of the workshop on participants' marketing and customer service capabilities.

Discussion

The findings of this community service program indicate that product branding and online customer service are essential components of business success in the digital era. The workshop effectively increased participants' awareness of the strategic role of branding in differentiating products, strengthening market positioning, and enhancing customer loyalty.

One of the most significant outcomes was the improvement in participants' understanding of brand identity. Before the workshop, many MSME entrepreneurs perceived branding as merely creating a logo or product label. However, after participating in the training, they recognized that branding encompasses business values, customer perceptions, communication strategies, and overall business image. This broader understanding enabled participants to develop more comprehensive branding strategies for their products and services.

The results also demonstrated that customer service excellence significantly influences customer satisfaction and business sustainability. Participants learned that prompt responses, professional communication, empathy, and effective problem-solving are critical factors in building positive customer experiences. The workshop helped participants understand that online customer service is not only a support function but also a powerful marketing tool that can strengthen customer relationships and encourage repeat purchases.

Another important finding was the effectiveness of practical and participatory learning methods. Through simulations and real-world case studies, participants were able to apply branding and customer service concepts directly to their own businesses. This approach enhanced learning outcomes and increased participants' confidence in implementing the strategies discussed during the workshop.

The mentoring activities played a vital role in ensuring the sustainability of the program's impact. Continuous guidance enabled participants to overcome implementation challenges and refine their branding and customer service practices. This finding highlights the importance of combining training activities with follow-up mentoring to achieve long-term behavioral and organizational changes.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified during the program. Differences in participants' educational backgrounds, business experiences, and digital literacy levels affected the pace of learning. Some participants required additional assistance in understanding branding concepts and utilizing digital communication tools. Therefore, future programs should provide extended mentoring and advanced workshops to accommodate varying participant needs.

Overall, the workshop successfully enhanced participants' knowledge and skills related to product branding and online customer service. The program demonstrated that strengthening branding strategies and improving customer service quality can help MSMEs increase competitiveness, build stronger customer relationships, expand market opportunities, and achieve sustainable business growth in Mesuji Regency.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The community service program entitled "Workshop on Product Branding Strategies and Online Customer Service for MSMEs in Mesuji Regency" was successfully implemented and achieved its primary objective of enhancing the knowledge and practical skills of MSME entrepreneurs in the areas of branding and customer service. The program demonstrated that effective branding and high-quality online customer service are critical factors in strengthening business competitiveness and supporting sustainable business growth.

Prior to the workshop, many participants had limited understanding of brand development and customer relationship management. Most MSME entrepreneurs focused primarily on selling products and had not yet established a strong brand identity or structured customer service practices. Following the workshop, participants showed significant improvement in their understanding of branding concepts, brand positioning, customer satisfaction, and digital communication strategies.

The training activities enabled participants to identify brand values, develop branding strategies, create consistent business identities, and improve customer communication through digital platforms. Participants also gained practical skills in handling customer inquiries, responding to complaints, and

maintaining professional relationships with customers in online environments.

The findings indicate that branding and customer service training can positively influence the ability of MSMEs to build customer trust, strengthen brand recognition, and improve customer loyalty. Furthermore, the mentoring activities helped participants apply the knowledge gained during the workshop to their daily business operations, thereby increasing the sustainability of the program's outcomes.

Overall, the workshop contributed significantly to improving the capacity of MSME entrepreneurs in Mesuji Regency and supported their efforts to adapt to the increasingly competitive and digitalized business environment.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the community service program, several recommendations can be proposed for various stakeholders.

For MSME entrepreneurs, it is recommended that they continue to strengthen their branding strategies and maintain consistent communication with customers through digital platforms. Business owners should regularly evaluate their brand image, improve service quality, and actively engage with customers to build long-term relationships and customer loyalty.

For local government institutions, it is recommended to provide continuous support through training programs, mentoring activities, and business development initiatives focused on branding, digital marketing, and customer relationship management. Such support can help MSMEs improve their competitiveness and adapt to changing market demands.

For higher education institutions, community service programs should continue to focus on practical business development skills that directly address the needs of local entrepreneurs. Universities can play a strategic role in providing education, consultation, mentoring, and innovation-based solutions to support MSME growth.

For future community service activities, it is recommended to involve a larger and more diverse group of MSME participants and to extend the mentoring period. Long-term assistance can help participants implement branding and customer

service strategies more effectively and measure their impact on business performance.

Finally, future studies and community service programs may explore the relationship between branding strategies, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and business performance using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Such studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how branding and customer service contribute to the sustainable development of MSMEs in the digital economy.

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