

COMMUNITY-BASED CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH DIGITAL ECOSYSTEMS: EMPOWERING LOCAL CRAFTS AND AGRO-INDUSTRY ENTREPRENEURS IN MATARAM

Anandhiya Intan Prabandari^{1*}, Tri Wahyu Yuliani²

¹²Faculty of Economics and Business, Jenderal Soedirman University, Indonesia

*Email corresponding author: anandhiya.unsoed@ac.id

Abstract

Amid the rapid transition toward a digital economy, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in regional tourism hubs face the dual challenge of adapting to digital ecosystems while maintaining sustainable and responsible business practices. This community service initiative addressed capacity barriers faced by local agro-industry and premium craft sectors in Mataram, Lombok, through partnerships with NUTSAFIR Cookies, representing local agro-industry, and Dwi Kristy Mutiara, representing high-value cultural crafts. The program aimed to strengthen the partners' economic resilience and market accessibility by supporting their integration into a sustainable digital ecosystem. Using a participatory capacity-building approach, the intervention included digital literacy training, e-commerce optimization, digital brand storytelling, and simple digital financial management. Descriptive evaluation indicated improvements in participants' understanding, strategic readiness, and ability to identify relevant digital tools for marketing, customer communication, financial recording, and business networking. The program also encouraged stronger collaboration between local enterprises, resource suppliers, universities, and other supporting stakeholders. The initiative concludes that digital ecosystem integration, when combined with community empowerment and continued mentoring, can strengthen the adaptive capacity of local enterprises and support more responsible entrepreneurship in tourism-oriented regions.

Keywords: Community Empowerment, Digital Ecosystems, Agro-Industry, Sustainable Crafts, Mataram Lombok.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are widely recognized as the backbone of Indonesia's economy, making significant contributions to job creation, increased local income, and regional economic resilience. In addition to their economic role, MSMEs also preserve local knowledge, cultural identity, and traditional products that support the competitiveness of tourism destinations. In regions where tourism and the local creative industries are closely intertwined, MSMEs function not only as business entities but also as community-based actors that strengthen inclusive and sustainable economic development. However, the increasing digitalization of markets has fundamentally changed the way businesses interact with consumers, making it necessary for MSMEs to adopt digital technologies to remain competitive.

The rapid growth of Indonesia's digital economy presents significant opportunities for MSMEs to expand their market reach, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen customer engagement through digital platforms. The increasingly widespread use of social media, e-commerce, digital payment systems, and online communication channels has lowered barriers to market entry and enabled small businesses to reach both domestic and international consumers. However, the benefits of digital transformation are not automatically accessible to all business

owners. Many community-based businesses still face difficulties in adopting digital technology due to limited digital literacy, inadequate managerial capacity, insufficient branding strategies, and a limited understanding of the digital business ecosystem. As a result, many MSMEs continue to rely on conventional marketing approaches, thereby limiting their competitiveness in an increasingly digital market.

These challenges are particularly evident in tourism-oriented regions such as Mataram, Lombok, where local economic development is closely tied to agro-industry and the cultural creative industries. Mataram serves as a key gateway for tourism in West Nusa Tenggara and is home to many community-based enterprises that produce local food products, handicrafts, and cultural souvenirs. Although tourism creates substantial market opportunities, many local entrepreneurs have not yet fully leveraged digital platforms to reach a broader customer base or strengthen the long-term sustainability of their businesses. Therefore, the transition to a digital economy requires not only the adoption of technology but also systematic capacity building to equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate digital tools into their day-to-day business operations.

Among the businesses facing these challenges are NUTSAFIR Cookies, a local agro-industrial enterprise that produces processed food products, and Dwi Kristy Mutiara, a premium pearl craft business that promotes Lombok's cultural identity through high-value jewelry products. Although both businesses have established product quality and recognition in the local market, they still face several common obstacles, including limited digital marketing capabilities, suboptimal use of e-commerce platforms, inconsistent brand communication, limited digital financial recording, and a lack of integration among the digital tools used in daily business activities.

Addressing these challenges requires more than just conventional entrepreneurship training. Contemporary community development approaches emphasize that successful digital transformation depends on the creation of a digital ecosystem in which entrepreneurs, local communities, educational institutions, government agencies, and supporting organizations collaborate to facilitate knowledge exchange, technology adoption, and sustainable business growth. From this perspective, community empowerment goes beyond simply improving individuals' technical skills; it involves strengthening collaborative networks, fostering innovation, and building local capacity that enables businesses to continuously adapt to changing market conditions. Therefore, a participatory capacity-building approach is essential to ensure that digital transformation becomes an inclusive process driven by community needs, not merely by technology alone.

Based on these considerations, this community service program implements community-based capacity-building initiatives through a digital ecosystem involving NUTSAFIR Cookies and Dwi Kristy Mutiara as community partners in Mataram. The program combines digital literacy training, branding and storytelling workshops, e-commerce optimization, digital financial management, and ongoing mentoring to enhance the entrepreneurial capacity of local business owners.

Therefore, the objective of this community service program is to enhance the capacity of local agro-industrial and handicraft entrepreneurs through the development of a participatory digital ecosystem. Specifically, the program aims to improve digital literacy, strengthen branding and digital marketing, optimize the use of e-commerce platforms, improve financial management practices, and foster sustainable collaboration among community stakeholders. Ultimately, this initiative is expected to contribute to the development of resilient, competitive, and sustainable community-based businesses that support local economic development in Mataram and provide a replicable model for similar tourism-based communities across Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Transformation and Digital Business Ecosystems

Digital transformation is not limited to converting manual activities into digital formats; it involves changes in business processes, organizational capabilities, customer relationships, and value-creation mechanisms. For MSMEs, this process is shaped by limited resources, managerial capacity, employee skills, and the availability of a clear digital strategy. Eller et al. (2020) found that information technology, employee skills, and digital strategy are important antecedents of SME digitalization, while digitalization can contribute to stronger financial performance. Garzoni et al. (2020) further describe SME digital transformation as a staged process progressing from digital awareness and inquiry to digital collaboration and broader transformation. This indicates that MSMEs require gradual and context-sensitive support rather than the immediate adoption of complex technology.

A digital business ecosystem extends digital transformation beyond a single enterprise. Senyo et al. (2019) define it as a socio-technical network in which individuals, organizations, platforms, and technologies interact to co-create value. Within such an ecosystem, social media, marketplaces, digital payment systems, business messaging applications, financial applications, universities, government institutions, suppliers, and business communities are interconnected. Empirical evidence also shows that a well-developed digital business ecosystem can strengthen customer and employee satisfaction and subsequently support business performance (Fernández-Portillo et al., 2024). Therefore, MSME empowerment should develop both internal digital capabilities and external relationships among supporting actors.

Digital Literacy, Capabilities, and Business Adaptability

Digital literacy includes the ability to understand, select, operate, and evaluate digital technologies in accordance with business needs. It is broader than knowing how to use social media because entrepreneurs must also be able to identify market opportunities, manage digital content, communicate with customers, protect business information, and interpret digital data. Kim and Jin (2024) show that digital capabilities improve entrepreneurial performance and that the ability to recognize and exploit opportunities plays an important mediating role. A systematic review by Sagala and Óri (2024) similarly identifies managerial commitment, digital skills, strategy, organizational readiness, and ecosystem support as central factors in successful SME digital transformation.

Digital capabilities also support business resilience by enabling MSMEs to maintain communication, adjust market channels, and reorganize operations when the external environment changes. Papadopoulos et al. (2020) emphasize that digital technologies can help SMEs sustain business continuity and respond more flexibly to disruption. However, the availability of digital tools alone does not guarantee transformation. Entrepreneurs must integrate the tools into routines and decision-making, making capacity building, practical experimentation, and follow-up mentoring critical components of an empowerment program.

Digital Marketing, E-Commerce, and Customer Value Creation

Digital marketing enables MSMEs to communicate product information, build relationships, and reach customers beyond their immediate geographic market. Social media use can improve firm performance when it is supported by marketing capabilities such as branding and innovation (Tajvidi & Karami, 2021). Evidence from Indonesian MSMEs also demonstrates that social media marketing contributes to business performance when entrepreneurs perceive the technology as useful and are able to incorporate it into marketing activities (Tatik & Setiawan, 2025). Consequently, posting content alone is insufficient; MSMEs need consistent brand identity, audience targeting, content planning, interaction management, and performance evaluation.

E-commerce provides additional channels for transactions, customer communication, and market expansion. Research on Indonesian SMEs identifies wider market reach, increased sales opportunities, improved external communication, and a stronger company image as important perceived benefits of e-commerce adoption (Rahayu & Day, 2017). Digital transformation can also create new channels and new ways of delivering customer value when it is aligned with the unique

characteristics of the product and the enterprise's dynamic capabilities (Matarazzo et al., 2021). For local food and pearl crafts, this alignment may involve combining marketplace access with product photography, cultural storytelling, origin information, customer reviews, and responsive communication.

Digital Financial Management

Simple digital financial management supports the professionalization of MSMEs by enabling more orderly transaction recording, cash-flow monitoring, separation of business and household finances, and the preparation of basic financial information. Digital accounting should not be understood merely as replacing a notebook with an application; it should improve the reliability and usefulness of financial information for decision-making. Jassem and Abdelfattah (2026) found that the digitalization of accounting processes positively affects SME performance and organizational exploitation by helping enterprises use their existing resources more efficiently. Therefore, financial applications introduced during training should be simple, affordable, and matched to the actual recording capacity of business owners.

Community-Based Capacity Building and Mentoring

Community-based capacity building positions entrepreneurs as active participants in diagnosing problems, selecting solutions, and applying new practices. Training is more likely to influence business behavior when participants can connect the material to real operational challenges and receive practical feedback. Brooks et al. (2018) show that mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs within the same community can improve outcomes for microenterprise owners because it transfers context-specific knowledge that may not be provided through classroom teaching alone. Accordingly, the combination of workshops, hands-on practice, individual consultation, and continued mentoring is more appropriate than a one-time lecture.

Based on this literature, the program applies an integrated framework in which digital literacy, marketing, e-commerce, financial management, mentoring, and stakeholder collaboration reinforce one another. These components are expected to improve the partners' understanding, confidence, strategic readiness, and ability to integrate digital tools into business processes. Because this article reports a community service intervention using descriptive evaluation rather than hypothesis testing, no research hypotheses are formulated.

RESEARCH METHODS

This community service initiative was carried out using a participatory community empowerment approach combined with a capacity-building approach to enhance the capacity of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to adopt the digital ecosystem in a sustainable manner. This approach positions the partners as the primary actors in every stage of the activity, ensuring that the processes of problem identification, solution development, implementation, and evaluation are carried out collaboratively. Through this approach, the program focuses not only on knowledge transfer but also on strengthening the partners' ability to apply digital technology in accordance with the needs and characteristics of their businesses.

The community service activity was held on July 15-16, 2026, at Aruna Senggigi Resort and Convention in Lombok, which served as the venue for training and mentoring. This location was chosen to provide a conducive learning environment and to facilitate interaction and collaboration between the implementation team and MSME partners.

This program involved two main partners: NUTSAFIR Cookies, which operates in the agroindustry sector using local food products, and Dwi Kristy Mutiara, which specializes in pearl crafts—one of the flagship products of the creative economy in West Nusa Tenggara. Both partners were invited to participate in a series of training and mentoring activities designed to enhance their business capacity through the utilization of the digital ecosystem.

During the program, participants received training on digital literacy, branding, digital marketing optimization, the use of e-commerce platforms, digital financial management, and strategies for sustainable business development. In addition to lectures, the program also featured interactive discussions, hands-on practice, and business consultations, allowing participants to discuss specific challenges they face in managing their businesses.

The partners in this initiative consist of two MSME operators representing key sectors in Mataram City: NUTSAFIR Cookies, an agro-industrial business based on local food products, and Dwi Kristy Mutiara, a pearl craft business that has become one of the icons of the creative economy in West Nusa Tenggara. Both partners were selected because they possess significant market potential but still face various challenges in utilizing digital technology, managing marketing efforts, strengthening brand identity, and implementing business management practices that support competitiveness in the digital economy era.

The program is implemented through four main stages: (1) needs assessment, (2) capacity building, (3) implementation support, and (4) program evaluation, as shown in Figure 1.

Needs Assessment

The initial stage aims to identify the current conditions and challenges faced by each partner. The assessment is conducted through field observations, in-depth interviews with business owners, and participatory discussions regarding ongoing business processes. The information collected covers aspects of marketing, digital literacy levels, the use of digital media, financial management, and the partners' readiness to develop their businesses through the digital ecosystem. The assessment results serve as the basis for developing training materials and mentoring strategies tailored to the partners' needs.

Capacity Building

Based on the results of the needs assessment, a series of training sessions is conducted, designed to enhance the partners' competencies in managing digital-based businesses. Training topics include:

- a. Digital literacy for MSME owners;
- b. Branding enhancement and digital storytelling;
- c. Optimizing digital marketing through social media and marketplaces;
- d. Using business support apps such as Google Business Profile and WhatsApp Business;
- e. Simple digital financial management using financial record-keeping apps; and
- f. Applying the principles of sustainable entrepreneurship

Implementation Support

Following the training, activities continued with intensive support provided to each partner. The support was provided directly through business consultations, assistance in developing digital content, optimizing social media and marketplace accounts, formulating promotional strategies, and implementing digital financial record-keeping systems. This phase aimed to ensure that all training materials could be effectively applied in accordance with the business conditions of each partner and to provide solutions to various challenges that arose during the implementation process.

Program Evaluation

An evaluation was conducted to assess the program's effectiveness in enhancing the partners' capacity. The evaluation employed a descriptive approach by comparing conditions before and after the activities, based on observations, interviews, documentation, and feedback from participants.

Evaluation indicators include improvements in digital literacy, the ability to manage digital marketing channels, the utilization of e-commerce platforms, the adoption of digital financial

record-keeping, the quality of promotional materials produced, and an enhanced understanding of business development strategies based on the digital ecosystem. Additionally, the evaluation assesses changes in entrepreneurial behavior, business owners' confidence in utilizing digital technology, and the formation of collaborative networks that support business sustainability.

Table 1. Community Service Activities and Expected Outputs

Stage	Activities	Expected Outputs
Needs Assessment	Observation, interviews, business diagnosis, problem identification	Identification of business needs and intervention priorities
Capacity Building	Training on digital literacy, branding, e-commerce, financial management, and sustainable entrepreneurship	Improved knowledge and practical digital business skills
Mentoring and Implementation	Individual coaching, business consultation, practical assistance, monitoring	Adoption of digital tools and improved business practices
Evaluation	Observation, participant feedback, documentation, before-after comparison	Assessment of program effectiveness and recommendations for future improvement

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program was held on July 15-16, 2026, at Aruna Senggigi Resort and Convention in Lombok, involving two key partners: NUTSAFIR Cookies, a local food-based agro-industrial business, and Dwi Kristy Mutiara, a pearl craft business. The activity combined presentations, participatory discussions, hands-on practice, and individual business consultation. This design allowed the participants to relate digital concepts directly to their products and operating conditions. A gradual and practice-oriented approach is appropriate for MSMEs because digital transformation generally develops through stages of awareness, exploration, collaboration, and implementation rather than through a single technological intervention (Garzoni et al., 2020).

Prior to the training, the partners' needs were identified through discussions and brief observations of their current business practices. Both partners already offered products with good local market potential, but their digital activities were not yet integrated into a coherent business strategy. The main issues included limited promotional planning, suboptimal e-commerce use, inconsistent brand communication, fragmented customer-contact channels, and rudimentary financial recording. These conditions are consistent with evidence that SME digitalization is influenced not only by access to technology but also by employee skills, managerial readiness, and the existence of a digital strategy (Eller et al., 2020; Sagala & Ōri, 2024).

The workshop materials were designed to address these needs and covered digital literacy, brand identity, digital storytelling, social media marketing, online marketplaces, Google Business Profile, WhatsApp Business, simple digital financial management, and sustainable business development. The program introduced these tools as connected components of a digital business ecosystem rather than as separate applications. This framing follows Senyo et al. (2019), who describe digital business ecosystems as networks of actors and technologies that jointly create value, and Papadopoulos et al. (2020), who emphasize the role of integrated digital technologies in strengthening SME adaptability and business continuity.

Partner Capacity Building through the Digital Ecosystem

The implementation of the program indicated an increase in the partners' understanding of digital transformation and the functions of different digital tools. Before the program, technology use was largely associated with basic communication through social media. Following the training, the participants were able to identify how social media, marketplaces, Google Business Profile,

business messaging applications, and financial applications could support different stages of the customer and operational process. This shift represents an early improvement in digital capability and opportunity recognition, both of which are important foundations of entrepreneurial performance (Kim & Jin, 2024).

In terms of marketing, participants gained an understanding of how brand identity, product storytelling, visual content, platform selection, and customer interaction should be combined within a more systematic digital marketing strategy. For NUTSAFIR Cookies, digital content can communicate product quality, local ingredients, packaging, consumption occasions, and Lombok's culinary identity. For Dwi Kristy Mutiara, digital storytelling can highlight pearl quality, craftsmanship, design, authenticity, and the involvement of local artisans. Social media can support business performance when its use is translated into branding and innovation capabilities (Tajvidi & Karami, 2021), while research in Indonesia also confirms the relevance of social media marketing for MSME performance (Tatik & Setiawan, 2025).

In addition to marketing, participants received training on simple digital financial recording. The material emphasized recording daily cash inflows and outflows, separating personal and business transactions, monitoring receivables and payables, and using basic reports to evaluate business conditions. This component was important because digital marketing and e-commerce expansion can increase transaction complexity if they are not supported by reliable records. The digitalization of accounting processes can improve operational efficiency and SME performance by enabling better use of existing resources and business information (Jassem & Abdelfattah, 2026).

Impact of the Program on Partner Business Development

The descriptive evaluation showed positive changes in the partners' knowledge, confidence, and readiness to adopt digital practices. The participants were better able to identify appropriate platforms, formulate digital content directions, understand marketplace functions, and recognize the importance of financial recording. However, because the evaluation was conducted around the activity period and did not use quantitative performance indicators, these results should be interpreted as improvements in capacity and strategic readiness rather than as verified increases in sales, profits, digital engagement, or market share.

Table 2. Changes in Partner Conditions Before and After the Program

Aspect	Before the Program	After the Program
Digital Literacy	Limited understanding and utilization of digital tools for business operations.	Improved understanding of digital technologies and their application in business management.
Branding	Brand identity and product positioning were not well established.	Increased awareness of the importance of branding and digital storytelling to strengthen product identity.
Digital Marketing	Marketing activities relied primarily on conventional methods and unstructured social media use.	Participants developed more systematic digital marketing strategies using social media and online promotional content.
E-commerce Utilization	Limited use of online marketplaces and digital business platforms.	Improved knowledge and skills in optimizing e-commerce platforms to expand market reach.
Financial Management	Financial records were maintained manually with limited business analysis.	Participants understood and began adopting simple digital bookkeeping practices to improve financial management.
Business Networking	Collaboration with other business actors and	Enhanced opportunities for collaboration and networking through participation in

Aspect	Before the Program	After the Program
	stakeholders was relatively limited.	the community empowerment program and digital ecosystem initiatives.

In addition to enhancing individual skills, the event created opportunities for collaboration through discussion and experience sharing. These interactions allowed the partners to exchange information about customers, product presentation, digital platforms, and potential collaboration with supporting institutions. This outcome reflects the ecosystem perspective, in which value is created through relationships among enterprises, technologies, suppliers, customers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders (Senyo et al., 2019). A supportive digital ecosystem can also strengthen stakeholder satisfaction and contribute to improved business performance when the technologies are relevant and usable (Fernández-Portillo et al., 2024).

The results suggest that community empowerment based on capacity building is suitable for improving MSME readiness for the digital economy. The combination of problem identification, training, hands-on practice, and consultation enabled the partners to apply the material to their specific business circumstances. This is important because standardized training may provide general knowledge but may not resolve operational issues faced by individual enterprises. Evidence from microenterprise programs indicates that context-specific mentoring can generate stronger learning outcomes because entrepreneurs receive practical knowledge from people who understand similar business environments (Brooks et al., 2018).

The concept of a digital ecosystem introduced in this initiative also broadened the participants' understanding of digital transformation. Digitalization was no longer viewed only as social media posting, but as the integration of customer discovery, communication, transactions, location information, financial recording, and business networking. This interpretation is aligned with the digital business ecosystem framework, which emphasizes interconnected technologies and actors rather than isolated digital tools (Senyo et al., 2019). The practical implication is that the partners should prioritize a small number of mutually connected tools and establish consistent operating routines before adopting additional platforms.

For NUTSAFIR Cookies, a digital branding and e-commerce strategy can strengthen the competitiveness of local agro-industrial products by presenting product information more clearly and increasing accessibility beyond the local market. Studies of Indonesian SMEs identify market expansion, external communication, sales opportunities, and corporate image as key benefits of e-commerce adoption (Rahayu & Day, 2017). For Dwi Kristy Mutiara, digital storytelling can create customer value by connecting premium product attributes with Lombok's cultural identity and craft processes. Evidence from creative-sector SMEs shows that digital transformation can create new distribution channels and new mechanisms for delivering customer value when it is supported by relevant organizational capabilities (Matarazzo et al., 2021).

The program also highlights that the sustainability of digital adoption depends on continued mentoring and stakeholder collaboration. A one-time workshop can improve awareness, but changes in business routines require experimentation, feedback, and repeated application. Continued assistance is therefore needed to review content consistency, marketplace activity, customer response, financial records, and barriers encountered during implementation. This approach is supported by research showing the value of context-based mentorship for microenterprises (Brooks et al., 2018) and by systematic evidence identifying ecosystem support and organizational learning as success factors in SME digital transformation (Sagala & Őri, 2024).

Overall, the community service initiative strengthened the partners' understanding and initial readiness to integrate digital tools into business development. The empowerment model, which combines needs assessment, capacity building, practical implementation, mentoring, and stakeholder collaboration, has potential for replication in other tourism-based MSME communities. Future evaluation should include follow-up observations and measurable indicators, such as the

consistency of digital content, marketplace transactions, customer inquiries, engagement rates, the completeness of financial records, sales growth, and the formation of ongoing business partnerships.

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrated that community-based capacity building through a digital ecosystem can enhance the capacity of local MSMEs to adapt to the digital economy. Through training and mentoring on digital literacy, branding, e-commerce, and digital financial management, the partner enterprises—NUTSAFIR Cookies and Dwi Kristy Mutiara—improved their understanding and readiness to utilize digital technologies to strengthen business management, expand market access, and increase competitiveness.

The program also showed that integrating digital transformation with participatory community empowerment creates a more sustainable approach to MSME development. Continuous collaboration among universities, business actors, and other stakeholders is essential to ensure the long-term adoption of digital practices. This model has the potential to be replicated in other tourism-based communities to support sustainable local economic development.

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