

Optimizing Hobbies to Improve Community Welfare Through Assistance in Building Personal Branding in The Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

The development of information and communication technology has opened up significant opportunities for communities to increase their economic capacity and competitiveness through the use of digital media. However, the utilization of this technology has not been fully optimized, especially for the community and MSMEs in Lempangang Village, who still face limitations in digital literacy, online marketing, and understanding of personal branding. This community service activity aims to help the community build personal branding as an effort to optimize their potential, increase self-confidence, and expand business and career opportunities in the digital era. The methods used included field observation, needs analysis, surveys, program planning, and activity implementation in the form of material delivery, hands-on practice, and a question-and-answer session. This activity involved 68 participants consisting of community members, students, and the implementation team. The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in understanding the concept of personal branding, recognizing their potential, and utilizing digital media more positively and productively. The program also increased participants' confidence in showcasing their potential to the public and strengthened the partnership between the implementation team and the community. Thus, personal branding assistance has been proven to contribute to strengthening community capacity. Sustainability of the program, strengthening training methods, supporting digital resources, and collaboration between stakeholders are needed for its broader and more sustainable impact.

1. Introduction

The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought significant changes to the lives of Indonesians. In education, the use of e-learning, digital learning media, ICT, and artificial intelligence has transformed learning methods from

traditional to more modern and innovative (Putra et al., 2024). In communication and information dissemination, new media enables people to obtain and share information without limitations of distance and time. This has also influenced people's media consumption habits, such as the shift from television to online streaming platforms (Yuwono et al., 2020). Technological developments are also inclusive. In government and economics, the use of information technology encourages improvements in governance, public services, and economic activities. Technology supports economic growth by opening access to business opportunities and increasing social participation (Habibah & Irwansyah, 2021). However, this development is still accompanied by a gap in digital infrastructure between regions and other obstacles. This does not eliminate the many contributions that technology can make, especially in the business context.

The opportunities created by technological developments are evident in various fields, particularly in digital business. E-commerce helps small and medium-sized businesses sell products online to consumers in various regions, even globally, without the need for physical stores, enabling them to compete with larger companies. For MSMEs, the use of e-commerce and social media supports online marketing strategies to increase product recognition and sales. Digital transformation also provides opportunities for MSMEs to strengthen their position in local markets by increasing efficiency and productivity (Basri, 2020). These changes drive business efficiency, particularly through collaboration between banks and fintech companies. This can also improve operational efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and expand access to financial services for previously underserved communities. Furthermore, digitalization encourages the emergence of new product innovations and business models, such as social marketing and digital-based businesses (Tsakila et al., 2024). With all these conveniences, new entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly in the creative economy, supported by intense and easy technology integration, are a boon for entrepreneurs in the digital era.

Optimizing technology in business can be done in various ways, but this journey generally begins with building a distinctive identity, better known as personal branding. Personal branding is a strategic effort to introduce oneself through social media by showcasing one's abilities, values, and professional identity (Fitria, 2023). Technological developments and social media usage patterns have made the process of building a personal brand increasingly easy and accessible to various groups. Platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube can be used to build a digital identity, maintain a reputation, and demonstrate expertise in a specific field (Shohibah & Mutiarni, 2023). Strong personal branding has been shown to support career success, increase self-confidence and credibility, and expand professional networks. However, personal branding also poses ethical challenges, such as the tendency to portray oneself as a product and the risk of engaging in actions inconsistent with professional values (Rahayu & Marka, 2024). In the digital era, reputation is a crucial aspect of having a successful career. Personal branding is a crucial investment in building social relationships and gaining benefits. Therefore, it is crucial for individuals to maintain a consistent identity across various platforms, especially after successfully building their personal brand.

Empirically, personal branding has been proven to influence a person's performance and career direction. This process begins with recognizing one's abilities, conducting introspection,

and setting clear career goals so that one can develop their qualities in a directed manner (Rifaldo et al., 2019). In career development, personal branding helps one demonstrate uniqueness, build emotional connections with others, and strengthen recognition of one's competencies. Building personal branding also needs to be continuously improved through training that is useful for increasing knowledge and understanding, as well as preparing the younger generation to face job competition (Widiawati et al., 2024). The use of social media to build personal branding helps job seekers promote their strengths, attract the attention of employers, and obtain more career opportunities and recruitment information (Sary & Wijaya, 2023). This can be done continuously to promote one's skills and expertise as part of personal branding.

Based on this accumulated information, personal branding is considered an important aspect that can be used to build a career, enhance one's potential, and can serve as a medium to illustrate one's skills. Speaking of self-potential, every individual possesses unlimited potential, especially the younger generation. Lempangang Village is one of the villages considered to have adequate access to digital infrastructure, with internet access accessible to the village community. The use of facilities such as the internet has a positive two-way impact: the potential for consumption and productivity enhancement, both of which have equal potential. With adequate internet access, the community can utilize this facility to build their personal branding. By considering factors such as effective methods and the selection of appropriate technology, this activity aims to help optimize the use of digital infrastructure in Lempangang Village to assist the community in building their personal branding. The goal of this activity is to further align entrepreneurship and economic independence, as well as the capability to create creative economic jobs that can reduce unemployment and poverty.

2. Method

This community service program was carried out in Lempangang Village, Bajeng District, Gowa Regency. Prior to the activity, observations and needs analysis were conducted, followed by a survey conducted by a team of students. The planning stage was carried out by observing the location. The results of this observation showed that the target location has many Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) run by the local community. The analysis indicated that MSMEs in Lempangang Village have not fully optimized technology to carry out their daily production activities. This is an obstacle to attracting more consumers and increasing sales. In addition, the local community is not yet fully familiar with how to sell online so their sales performance is limited to what is successfully sold offline. The planning stage resulted in a conclusion indicating that Lempangang Village needs a program to help the community in optimizing the digital infrastructure that has reached their area.

The implementation phase consisted of a series of activities, including an opening ceremony, which featured remarks from village government leaders and faculty leaders. The event attracted 68 participants, including village residents, students from the Management Study Program at Sheikh Yusuf Al Makassar University, and speakers. The event featured a session on personal branding, how to build it, and how to utilize it. The next main phase was a practical session, followed by a question-and-answer session. Finally, the event concluded with a closing ceremony and a brief evaluation of the program's benefits.

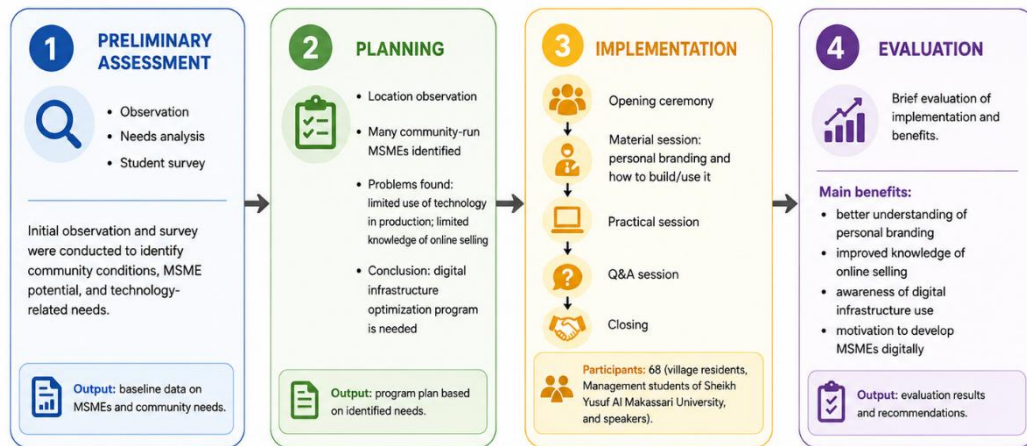


Figure 1. Community Service Framework

3. Results and Discussion

The implementation of the Community Service program, which focused on mentoring personal branding development, demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This activity enhanced participants' understanding of the concept, function, and urgency of personal branding in the context of social life and the use of digital space. Furthermore, participants began to identify their potential, abilities, and character traits that can be developed as a basis for forming a more focused and valuable self-image. Furthermore, this activity provided participants with basic skills for building personal branding through digital media in a positive and productive manner. Another visible impact was increased self-confidence in presenting their potential to the public. In addition to individual achievements, this activity also successfully strengthened the partnership between the implementation team and the community, which is crucial for the sustainability of the mentoring program and the development of community service activities in the next phase.



Figure 2. Community Service Process

The Community Service (PkM) program, which focused on mentoring personal branding development, demonstrated positive outcomes consistent with similar PkM programs. Improved participant knowledge, skills, and attitudes are common indicators of success in community empowerment-based mentoring programs. Participants' understanding of the concept and urgency of personal branding in the digital space is consistent with findings that

digital-based training can enhance individuals' capacity to utilize digital platforms productively (Mubarok et al., 2024). Participants' ability to identify their potential and character as a basis for developing self-image reflects the strengthening of human capital, which emphasizes the enhancement of individual knowledge and abilities. Increased participant confidence in demonstrating their potential was also found in similar mentoring programs (Putri et al., 2024). In addition to individual achievements, strengthening partnerships between the implementation team and the community is crucial for the program's sustainability, as it is emphasized that collaboration and ongoing mentoring are key factors in the success of the PkM program.

During the implementation of this Community Service activity, several obstacles were encountered that impacted the effectiveness of the mentoring process. The main obstacle faced was the participants' limited initial understanding of the concept of personal branding, necessitating adjustments in the delivery of the material to make it more easily understood. Furthermore, participants' abilities in utilizing digital media also showed varying levels, so the training process could not be conducted with a uniform approach. The limited time for mentoring also posed a challenge, as the material, which is both conceptual and practical, ideally requires a more adequate learning duration. To overcome these obstacles, the implementation team implemented several adaptive and participatory strategic steps. The material was presented in a simple, gradual, and contextual manner to suit the participants' level of understanding. Furthermore, the team provided direct mentoring to participants to help them understand the application of personal branding more concretely, particularly in the use of digital media. Furthermore, examples of personal branding practices were presented to clarify the material and make it easier for participants to connect the concept with its implementation. Through this approach, obstacles that emerged during the activity were minimized, ensuring that the learning process continued effectively.

The obstacle of limited initial understanding among participants is a common challenge in Community Service Program activities, as found in branding training in Melung Tourism Village, where participants were unfamiliar with the concept of branding, requiring the facilitator to conduct knowledge sharing first. The diversity of participants' digital skills also presents a similar obstacle in various mentoring activities, preventing a uniform approach (Herli et al., 2023). The adaptive strategy implemented, namely delivering material in a simple, gradual, and contextual manner, aligns with the approach recommended in various Community Service Program activities. Developing simple modules for easy understanding has been implemented in fashion design training, while intensive direct mentoring has proven effective in improving participant skills. Presenting practical examples as a strategy to clarify concepts was also implemented in narrative communication training for digital village branding (Susanto et al., 2021). This participatory and adaptive approach minimizes obstacles, ensuring effective learning.

To ensure the program's sustainable impact, this Community Service program is planned to be followed up with ongoing mentoring for participants. This ongoing mentoring is aimed at strengthening participants' abilities to build and manage personal branding more consistently, particularly through the use of digital media relevant to their individual needs and potential. Thus, the results of the program will not stop at the conceptual stage, but will also lead to more concrete and measurable implementation in daily activities and business

development. Furthermore, program follow-up is planned in the form of material development and expansion of activity targets. Material development is necessary to ensure that the training content is more adaptive to digital dynamics and able to more specifically address participant needs. Meanwhile, the expansion of targets is aimed at ensuring that the program benefits not only the participants who have already participated but also other community groups with similar needs. Through these steps, the community service program is expected to make a broader, sustainable, and strategic contribution to increasing community capacity, particularly in strengthening self-identity and competitiveness in the digital era.

The sustainability of the Community Service Program (PKM) is crucial for ensuring broader and more measurable impact. Ongoing post-training mentoring has proven effective in various contexts, such as three-month WhatsApp group mentoring for entrepreneurship and digital marketing training, and online consultations for farmer groups following digital branding workshops. A similar approach is recommended for digital marketing training for MSMEs, which emphasizes the importance of ongoing mentoring programs that include online consultations and individual mentoring (Rahmawati, 2024). Developing materials that adapt to digital dynamics aligns with recommendations for personal branding training for guitar craftsmen in Ngrombo Village, which suggests further training focusing on advanced digital skills such as social media management and marketing strategies. Expanding the target activities is also recommended in various Community Service Programs, including training on digital media utilization for MSMEs, which suggests more specific follow-up mentoring tailored to participants' needs and interests (Permata, 2023). Therefore, this follow-up plan has a strong empirical foundation to ensure the program's sustainable and strategic contribution.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the Community Service program, the personal branding mentoring program needs to be implemented sustainably so that the learning impacts obtained by participants can be maintained and developed optimally. Sustainability of the program is important to ensure that participants not only understand the basic concepts but are also able to apply them consistently in their social lives, business development, and preparation for entering the workforce. Furthermore, strengthening training methods is also necessary through a more interactive, applicable, and practice-based approach, so that the material presented is easier to understand and relevant to the real needs of participants in the digital era. Furthermore, the program's effectiveness will be more optimal if supported by the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, especially access to technology and digital media as the main instruments in developing personal branding. Another recommendation is the need to strengthen collaboration between educational institutions, the community, and relevant stakeholders so that the program can be implemented more systematically and sustainably. Expanding the program's target group to more diverse community groups, such as students, university students, and youth communities, is also a strategic step to ensure the program's benefits are felt more widely and contribute to increasing community capacity in facing challenges and opportunities in the digital era.

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