Digital Marketing Transformation of A Rural Curtain Enterprise: Optimizing Social Media, WhatsApp Business, and Google Maps for Felishsya Tirai in Tibona Village, Bulukumba

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ABSTRACT

Felishsya Tirai is a curtain-making micro-enterprise in Tibona Village, Bulukumpa Subdistrict, Bulukumba Regency, which has operated for nine years with a production capacity of about 64 units per week, or 256 units per month, supported by 10 employees and 3 family members. For the past six years, the owner had marketed products through a personal Facebook account with around 1,900 friends, but had no dedicated business account, WhatsApp Business, or location listing on Google Maps, so most customers still came through word of mouth. This made it difficult for customers outside the village to find the business online, and order communication remained manual. This community service program aimed to strengthen the digital presence of Felishsya Tirai through three steps: creating a dedicated business social media account, setting up WhatsApp Business with a catalog feature, and registering the business location on Google Maps, carried out through direct mentoring over one to two weeks. The results show that Felishsya Tirai now has three active digital channels, and since WhatsApp Business was introduced, the owner has already received inquiries from new customers who had never transacted before, and has independently learned to operate the

catalog feature. The quantitative impact on sales volume could not yet be measured due to the limited implementation period, but the change in digital visibility and readiness is clearly evident and consistent with findings from similar community service programs elsewhere. In conclusion, this digitalization program successfully expanded the marketing channels of Felishsya Tirai, which had previously relied only on word of mouth and personal Facebook, and needs to be followed up with periodic evaluation so that its impact on sales can be measured concretely.

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) hold a critical place within the Indonesian economy. According to Novitasari (2022), MSMEs make up about 61% of the country's national GDP, and they contribute significantly to creating jobs, distributing wealth, and reducing poverty. While the contributions made by MSMEs are huge, the study also reveals that many MSME operators do not know how to use digital marketing. Therefore, although the opportunities for MSMEs to grow are vast, the ability of business owners – especially those in rural areas – to use digital tools effectively does not match the potential. A similar problem exists for curtain-making MSMEs located in Tibona Village. For many years, these businesses have been unable to take advantage of digital channels to improve their business operations.

The situation of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Bulukumba Regency is an example of the challenges described above. Research conducted by Sarfiah et al., (2025) which was done on 122 MSME operators in Bira, Bulukumba Regency, showed that financial literacy and inclusion can be a factor that can positively and significantly affect the performance of MSMEs. On the other hand, the access to formal service (including digital service) is still very low; only around 30 percent of the MSMEs can access formal financial services. Additionally, the research showed that many MSME operators in Bulukumba are still using traditional ways of doing things related to business management and business marketing. Based on the results of the research, it is evident that limited access and limited literacy (financial and digital) are common issues for MSMEs in Bulukumba Regency, including the curtain-making MSMEs in Tibona Village who will be our partners in this initiative.

Felishsya Tirai is the partner in this study; she is an SME that produces curtains, and is operated by Mr. Suardi in Tibona Village, Bulukumpa District, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. The business has been running for nine years, producing an average of 64 units per week – equivalent to 256 units per month – using 10 employees and 3 family members. Initial interviews conducted by the research team with the owner showed that since the last six years, Mr. Suardi has used a personal Facebook account (with about 1,900 connections) to market his products. However, this is not a dedicated business account; neither does he use WhatsApp Business or register his business location on Google Maps. The owner stated that although there are customers coming from different places, the majority of them still find out about his products via word-of-mouth. This finding is similar to what Putri and Cahyono (2025) reported about female-led food SMEs in Kendal Regency, where they said that most female business

owners still use conventional word-of-mouth marketing because they don't know how to use social media effectively for marketing, thereby limiting the growth of their businesses' brands and keeping the market area limited to people who already know about their enterprises.

Felishsya Tirai currently uses some digital channels for business purposes while many others are yet to be used. As a result, there are several concrete issues that Felishsya Tirai faces. One issue is that although Felishsya Tirai is active on a personal Facebook page, it cannot be found by potential customers from other villages who use digital maps to find its physical location. This means that people who do not know anything about Felishsya Tirai will have difficulty finding it. Another issue is that ordering-related communications such as curtain size, pattern and price are being conducted using either personal accounts or telephone conversations. There are no automated response features or product catalogs available. Therefore, as the number of orders received increases with only 13 employees, conducting these types of business interactions will become increasingly inefficient. Additionally, since Felishsya Tirai uses a personal account as opposed to a business account, product documentation cannot be presented in a professional manner. Therefore, Felishsya Tirai cannot showcase all of the various curtain designs it produces to a larger group of people. Similar situations were identified by Ikerismawati et al. (2023) when examining MSMEs in the Sebani sub-district of Pasuruan City. Prior to providing professional assistance to MSMEs in the Sebani sub-district, they did not take advantage of tools such as Google Maps or WhatsApp Business for advertising purposes. Consequently, their visibility and interaction with customers were severely restricted.

Based on the above criteria, this community service program (Community Service Program/Kuliah Kerja Nyata) was developed to create solutions by assisting in the development of social media accounts for product promotion; developing WhatsApp Business as a communications tool and product catalog; and registering business locations in Google Maps. Social media, WhatsApp Business and Google Maps were chosen as the three channels to be utilized because they do not require any costs, are relatively simple for business owners to implement, and do not necessarily require a high level of digital literacy. The selection of these three channels is also supported by the findings of research conducted by Feshago Panjalu et al. (2024), which stated that there are three types of digital marketing that can be utilized by MSMEs (Micro Small Medium Enterprises) to develop their brand—from increasing product awareness among potential customers to developing customer loyalty. The utilization of a combination of these three digital channels has been successful in Mangkai Baru Village, Batu Bara Regency, where the registration of MSME businesses on Google Maps and strengthening of MSME brand image have allowed MSMEs to be more readily accessible to customers residing outside of the MSMEs' geographic area (Hardi et al., 2026).

The goal of the project is to build an initial digital footprint for curtain manufacturing MSMEs located in Tibona Village. The project will accomplish this through three sequential activities: establishing social media profiles, creating a WhatsApp Business profile, and registering each MSME on Google Maps. All of these activities are scheduled to occur over a 1-to-2 week implementation period. What makes the project unique is its targeted approach to a specific segment of the population (Rural-Based MSMEs involved in curtain production) which is generally ignored by digital transformation initiatives; and its combination of three

different digital channels into one comprehensive, streamlined support service that allows MSME owners to see immediate results and maintain their new digital presence independently.

2. Method

The real work lecture was conducted at Tibona Village, Bulukumpa District, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The duration of this real work lecture is from one week to two weeks. The business partner of this real work lecture is Mr. Suardi, who is the owner of the Felishsya Tirai MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). For nine years, Mr. Suardi has been producing curtains with a production capacity of approximately 64 units per week, or about 256 units per month. He has also hired 10 employees and 3 family members to help him produce the curtains. Prior to conducting the real work lecture, Mr. Suardi had used his personal Facebook account for selling for six years and had accumulated approximately 1,900 friends. However, he had not created a separate Facebook Business account, WhatsApp Business account, or recorded his business's location on Google Maps.

The first step in the implementation process was to assess needs by conducting field observations and interviewing the business owner about his current marketing practices. Following the assessment of needs, a plan for the program was developed. During this planning stage, appropriate social media platforms were chosen based upon the type of curtain products being sold; product photography was prepared; and relevant data from the business was gathered so that it would be used in creating profiles on WhatsApp Business and Google Maps. In the second part of the implementation process, social media accounts were established for promoting the products. Additionally, WhatsApp Business was configured to include a product catalog and store hours. Lastly, the business' location was registered on Google Maps so that it would appear in results when users searched online. Once these tasks were completed, the business owner received some basic training. This training included instructions on how to post content to the various social media channels; how to reply to questions asked by customers using WhatsApp Business; and how to make updates to the business profile on Google Maps without assistance. Finally, after establishing the accounts and providing the business owner with training, monitoring and evaluating were performed. Monitoring and evaluation ensured that all accounts created remained active and visible to the public. It also verified that the business owner knew how to manage these accounts.

In this study, direct mentoring was provided to participants in addition to participating as an observer. This approach was based on the digital marketing mentoring model for MSMEs developed by Ikerismawati et al. (2023), that combines educational classes with practical training to assist MSMEs in creating their own Google Maps and WhatsApp Business accounts. Data collection techniques applied throughout the course of this activity included using observation forms to record the condition of each MSME's business prior to and after being mentored, recording the interview answers given by each MSME owner, and documenting the entire process through photography. Because of the limited time available for this activity, and because the primary goal of this program was to help MSMEs create basic digital channels, a qualitative descriptive analytical method was utilized to compare each MSME's digital situation before receiving the intervention (where they had no digital channels at all) to their

digital situation after completing the intervention where they had successfully created three digital channels.

3. Results and Discussion

At the beginning, Felishsya Tirai can't be described as completely "digitally illiterate," since Mr. Suardi has used a personal Facebook account for six years to sell his products. The personal Facebook account had approximately 1900 followers. Since it is a personal account and not a professional storefront, there isn't an organized product catalog; it isn't linked to WhatsApp Business; and it isn't listed on Google Maps. Therefore, although Mr. Suardi has used online sales for several years through a personal account, most of his customers are referred by word-of-mouth; and possible new customers outside the village continue to have difficulty finding the business location or accessing a clearly organized product catalog.

The team worked with Mr. Suardi during the implementation phase to create separate, dedicated social media accounts for the business (not Mr. Suardi's personal accounts) that showed photos of curtains in different designs and dimensions, as well as pricing and ordering instructions. Additionally, the team created a WhatsApp Business account which included a product catalog and other pertinent business information. This enabled potential customers to view products available for purchase without having to ask for information regarding each item separately. Finally, the team added Mr. Suardi's business address to Google Maps, including the business name and category. Prior to this, Mr. Suardi's business had been in business for nine years without the ability to be found via online map searches.



Figure 1. Observation, Interview, and Assisting Mr. Suardi (Felishsya Tirai Owner)

The results of this program are in agreement with the results of Ikerismawati et al. (2023) about MSMEs in Sebani Village, Pasuruan City; specifically their increase in online presence on Google Maps and improved effectiveness in their marketing communication efforts due to their participation in a program where they received assistance to establish WhatsApp Business. In addition, these results are also in line with an effort to register MSMEs in Mangkai Baru Village with Google Maps and strengthen their branding. This project showed that MSMEs that had been difficult to find before the project were much easier to access for consumers after receiving support to register on a digital mapping platform (Bima Hardi et al., 2026). Lastly, the results of this program support the findings of Putri and Cahyono (2025) that social media based digital marketing training improves both the capacity and branding of MSMEs that used only word-of-mouth marketing prior to the training.

Although the initiative was only activated for a short time, there are some initial indicators of its success. Since the activation of WhatsApp Business, Mr. Suardi has received inquiries from potential customers about his curtains something that did not occur before when he used only his personal Facebook account to communicate. Mr. Suardi has also shown that he can manage the catalog feature in WhatsApp Business by himself, showing that the implementation team has successfully transferred digital skills to him. However, we cannot measure how many sales and production Mr. Suardi will have as a result of the initiative because we have only implemented it for 1-2 weeks. Therefore, our evidence of success is still qualitative the direct feedback from Mr. Suardi and the pictures taken during the set-up process of his account. These types of limitations are common with digital assistance programs that are implemented over a short period; as with other initiatives, it is suggested that a follow-up assessment be completed after a couple of months of using the account to see how much impact the initiative has had on sales.



Figure 2. Community Service Program Documentation

Unlike several digital transformation programs that provide assistance to small businesses but typically face issues with low digital literacy levels among business owners, the digital transformation process for Felishsya Tirai occurred with very few issues. Felishsya Tirai's success can be attributed to its owner, Mr. Suardi's prior experience of utilizing social media as a sales tool for six years. Therefore, Mr. Suardi was able to transition to utilizing WhatsApp Business and Google Maps in a short period of time. In addition to Mr. Suardi being willing to utilize alternative methods of selling his products, he has established an operational business employing 13 people, thus creating an immediate need to increase the size of Felishsya Tirai's customer base. As a result of the program's success, Mr. Suardi plans to maintain control of the three digital channels after the conclusion of the program. Therefore, the student participants of the community service (KKN) program and local digital facilitators should monitor Felishsya Tirai periodically to verify that content is being updated regularly on each of the digital channels and assess the impact on sales performance over time.

4. Conclusion

The success of this mentoring initiative in enhancing the online visibility of "Felishsya Tirai", a curtain manufacturer MSME owned by Mr. Suardi in Tibona Village, which has used only Mr. Suardi's personal Facebook account and word-of-mouth recommendations for the

past nine years since it was founded, is that through creating dedicated social media accounts for the business, setting up WhatsApp Business, and adding the MSME to Google Maps, the MSME now has a better organized digital brand identity and is able to reach potential customers who do not live within the village.

The goal of the project, to create three digital channels, has been met; evidence of meeting the goal includes requests from new potential customers through WhatsApp Business and the ability of Mr. Suardi to create and maintain the catalog feature of WhatsApp Business on his own. Although there is no way to quantify the effect of the project on sales because of how short the project was, these findings indicate that although many rural MSMEs (even those that already sell products using their personal social media accounts) have the technical skills needed to transition to using more structured business-oriented digital channels, they still need technical assistance. For the project to continue to succeed, it is recommended that members of Mr. Suardi's family regularly monitor the accounts created for the MSME and evaluate whether the project is having a positive effect on sales over the next few months. Additionally, after successful implementation of this three-channel digital mentoring model, it can be implemented in other MSMEs in Tibona Village and neighboring communities that have similar characteristics.

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