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Transformation of Agricultural Product Marketing Through Digital Marketing: Efforts to Improve the Competitiveness of Farmers

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Abstract

The transformation of the agricultural sector has become a crucial step in the economic development of rural areas, particularly in agrarian countries like Indonesia. Jrahi Village faces challenges marketing its agricultural products due to reliance on middlemen, price fluctuations, and limited market access. This program is designed to enhance farmers' competitiveness by implementing digital marketing strategies. The approach used is Participatory Action Research (PAR), which includes research, participation, action, and evaluation. The program involved 30 farmers from the Jrahi Village Farmer Group and followed a phased approach from needs identification to implementation evaluation. The results show that the program successfully improved the farmers' digital literacy, mastery of online marketing platforms, and technical skills in using digital media. Farmers were able to reduce their dependence on middlemen, expand market access, and strengthen their bargaining position. Moreover, adopting digital marketing increased the farmers' income and welfare. The digital marketing transformation in Jrahi Village enhanced farmer competitiveness and fostered a sustainable agricultural ecosystem.

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the agricultural sector is one of the keys to rural economic development, especially in agrarian countries like Indonesia. Jrahi Village, which has great potential in agricultural products such as coffee, spices, and vegetables, faces challenges marketing its produce. Obstacles such as reliance on middlemen, price fluctuations, and limited market access result in suboptimal farmer income. According to Saripi et al. (2024), most Indonesian farmers still rely on inefficient, traditional marketing methods that are vulnerable to market exploitation.

Farmers in Jrahi Village, like those in many other regions, often struggle to determine fair selling prices for their crops. Their weak bargaining position against middlemen forces them to accept prices far below market standards. Additionally, the lack of information about market trends and consumer demands is a major hindrance. These conditions make it difficult for farmers to increase their income and grow their

businesses. In the globalization era, this challenge intensifies due to competition from often cheaper imported products (Setiawan, 2024).

In the digital era, information technology has opened new opportunities for farmers to enhance the competitiveness of their agricultural products. Digital marketing, which includes social media, e-commerce, and agritech applications, offers farmers the chance to market their products directly to end consumers nationally and internationally (Fadlan et al., 2024). A study by Prasada et al. (2023) showed that implementing digital marketing in agriculture can increase farmers' profit margins compared to conventional methods. However, low digital literacy and a lack of understanding digital marketing strategies remain major challenges among rural farmers.

Jrahi Village has significant potential to use digital marketing as a solution for agricultural product marketing. With proper guidance and mentoring, farmers in this village can utilize digital platforms to expand market access, strengthen their bargaining power, and improve their income. Continuous digital marketing training programs can enhance farmers' understanding of technology, helping them optimize production (Putri et al., 2022).

This community service program aims to empower farmers in Jrahi Village through digital marketing training and mentoring. The approach includes digital literacy education, simulations of online marketing platforms, and mentoring throughout the implementation process (Fharaz et al., 2022). This transformation is expected to help farmers in the short term and create a sustainable agricultural ecosystem by using technology as a tool for empowerment (Istiqomah et al., 2024).

The transformation of agricultural product marketing through digital marketing contributes to increasing farmers' income and supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Krisnawati et al., 2019). This program aligns with the objectives of eradicating poverty, creating decent work, and improving the welfare of rural communities (Risa et al., 2021). Through a collaborative and solution-oriented approach, this initiative is expected to serve as a model for other villages in adopting digital technology for economic development (Arvianti et al., 2022).

METHODS

This community service program implemented the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. Activities were carried out from October to December 2024. This program's training and mentoring participants consisted of 30 farmers from Jrahi Village who are members of the local Farmer Group. The stages of the program implementation are as follows:

1. Needs Identification and Situational Analysis
   The first stage involved surveys and discussions with farmers to understand their needs and challenges in marketing agricultural products. The data and discussions included assessments of digital literacy levels, technological device access, and product marketing experience. The focus group discussion approach effectively uncovered farmers' problems and designed targeted solutions (Khikmiyah et al., 2024).
2. Community Participation
   a. Digital Literacy Training
      This stage aimed to improve farmers' ability to use technology devices such as smartphones, computers, and the internet. Training topics included basic introductions to digital devices, internet access, and communication apps like WhatsApp and social media. Digital literacy is a crucial initial step before progressing to digital marketing (Judijanto et al., 2024).

b. Digital Marketing Workshop
   At this stage, farmers were introduced to digital marketing concepts, including creating social media accounts, using online marketplaces, and using product photography techniques. Topics also covered online marketing strategies such as copywriting, promotion, and order management. This training has been proven to enhance farmers' skills in online product marketing.

3. Action Through Simulations and Hands-on Practice
   After the training, farmers were guided to practice using digital platforms directly. In these simulations, they created accounts, uploaded products, and ran basic promotions. Mentoring was provided to ensure they understood the necessary steps.
4. Evaluation Through Mentoring and Monitoring
   The evaluation was conducted by comparing pre-test and post-test results from training participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The transformation of agricultural product marketing through digital marketing has become one of the most effective solutions for enhancing farmers' competitiveness in the modern era. In Jrahi Village, applying digital strategies in agricultural product marketing is crucial, considering farmers' challenges in an increasingly competitive market. The outcomes of the digital marketing transformation for farmers in Jrahi Village involved several stages, namely:

Needs Identification and Situational Analysis

Farmers in Jrahi Village already own Android smartphones with at least basic internet access, the main digital marketing tool. The limitation lies in the underutilization of smartphones, as farmers mainly use them for communication.

Digital Literacy Learning

In this stage, farmers received training and understanding of basic digital device usage, including introducing different devices, accessing and using the internet effectively, and operating typical communication applications such as WhatsApp and other social media platforms. Farmers were also introduced to the basic concepts of digital literacy, enabling them to access relevant information, manage communication with consumers, and optimize online product marketing (Manik, 2024). Digital literacy is a crucial first step in digitalizing marketing; with a solid understanding of basic technology, farmers are better prepared to move forward to the next stage—using digital marketing to promote their agricultural products. It is hoped that through this stage, farmers can improve their technical skills, ultimately expanding marketing opportunities and boosting the competitiveness of agricultural products in Jrahi Village. The following documentation of training activities is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Training

Digital Marketing Workshop

At this stage, farmers were introduced to creating Instagram social media accounts. After creating their accounts, three photos were successfully uploaded using proper and appealing photo-taking techniques and concise captions that accurately describe Jrahi Village products. The copywriting techniques used in the captions on farmers' Instagram posts were engaging, and hashtags were included to categorize the products appropriately and increase engagement. Through these Instagram accounts, farmers in Jrahi Village have successfully applied basic digital marketing transformation. Moving forward, it is expected that this social media marketing technique can yield maximum product sales outcomes. The following is a display of the farmers' Instagram accounts as shown in Figure 2.

(a) (b) (c)

Figure 2 (a) Farmer instagram accounts, (b) Instagram content, and (c) Copywriting for instagram captions

Simulation and Hands-on Practice

After receiving training, farmers were allowed to practice using digital platforms directly. This simulation session taught them how to create accounts, upload products, and run basic promotions. Intensive mentoring was provided throughout the process to ensure a thorough understanding of each step.

This hands-on approach proved highly effective in helping farmers overcome technical obstacles, enhance their skills, and build confidence in using digital technology as a marketing tool. This will accelerate farmers' adaptation to digital marketing and further improve the competitiveness of their agricultural products.

Evaluation Through Mentoring and Monitoring

The evaluation was conducted by comparing pre-test and post-test results from the 30 training participants. The results showed a significant increase in participants' understanding and skills in digital marketing in Jrahi Village. All indicators showed improvement, especially in understanding basic digital marketing concepts and creating social media accounts for business purposes. Notable improvements were also observed in writing promotional captions, using WhatsApp for business, and uploading attractive product photos. These findings indicate that hands-on training and intensive mentoring effectively enhance farmers' digital literacy and independent marketing capabilities. A summary of the pre-test and post-test results is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Recap of pre-test and post-test results

Measured Indicator	Average Pre-test	Average Post-test	Difference
Basic understanding of digital devices (mobile phone, internet, social media)	2.43	3.53	1.1
Ability to use WhatsApp for business communication	2.37	3.27	0.9
Ability to create social media accounts (Instagram/Facebook) for business	2.53	3.6	1.07
Understanding of basic digital marketing concepts	2.53	3.7	1.17
Ability to upload product photos on social media using basic photography techniques	2.47	3.27	0.8
Ability to write engaging promotional captions (copywriting)	2.63	3.3	0.67
Ability to create marketplace accounts (Tokopedia/Shopee)	2.63	3.63	1.0
Ability to respond to messages/inboxes from potential buyers responsively	2.47	3.3	0.83
Understanding of basic promotional strategies on social media	2.4	3.57	1.17
Ability to conduct sales transactions independently through digital platforms	2.5	3.53	1.03

Subsequently, several mentoring days were conducted to help farmers address any technical challenges after training. Periodic monitoring was carried out to evaluate the program's effectiveness, including increases in sales and the number of interactions on digital platforms. This approach ensured farmers' sustainability and the success of digital marketing implementation (Setiadi et al., 2024), focusing on improved sales performance and digital engagement.

Intensive mentoring was provided to assist farmers in overcoming various technical challenges. During this period, periodic monitoring was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, with a focus on increasing sales and the number of interactions on digital platforms. This approach not only ensures a deep understanding of technology use but also supports the sustainability of digital marketing implementation among farmers, helping to enhance the competitiveness of their products continuously.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of agricultural product marketing through digital marketing in Jrahi Village has significantly improved farmers' competitiveness and overall well-being. The training and mentoring provided equipped farmers with digital literacy skills, proficiency in online marketing platforms, and practical experience with technology use.

Farmers have significantly improved their understanding and ability to utilize digital media through various stages—such as needs identification, digital literacy training, marketing workshops, simulations, and intensive mentoring. As a result, farmers in Jrahi Village were able to reduce dependency on middlemen, expand market access, and strengthen their bargaining position.

This collaborative and solution-oriented approach helped farmers market their products more effectively and supported the development of a sustainable agricultural ecosystem. This digital marketing transformation is hoped to serve as a model for other villages facing similar challenges in rural economic development.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

The first, second, and third authors conceived the ideas presented. The first and second authors developed the theory and performed the analysis. The third author verified the analytical methods. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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