TRANSFORMATION OF SUKAMAJU VILLAGE MSMES: INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH DIGITALIZATION

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Abstract - *Community empowerment is a key step toward village independence. One of the empowerment projects is carried out by the Community Service Program (KKN), which focuses on digitalizing MSMEs in Sukamaju Village, Baregbeg District, Ciamis Regency. This program intends to assist MSMEs not fully embracing digital technology in marketing their products. This study employs an empirical normative approach, with pre-implementation, training, and mentoring stages. The research findings indicate that the majority of MSMEs in Sukamaju Village are unfamiliar with digital marketing channels other than WhatsApp. MSMEs are trained to use social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, as well as design programs such as Canva, to improve packaging appeal and marketing reach. Further assistance was offered through a pilot project program for one of the MSMEs, MSME Mustofa, which makes excellent use of digital media. This program is aimed to boost MSME players' understanding and capacity to use digital technologies to grow their firms.*

Keyword: *Sukamaju Village, Community Empowerment, MSMEs, Digitalization, Marketing*

1. INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is an important aspect in efforts to build the independence of villagers. Independence can be interpreted as being able to achieve a level of progress and prosperity in the life of the community itself. In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI) the word "empowerment" comes from the root word "empowerment" with the meaning of strength or ability. Empowerment in KBBI is defined as a process or method, or as an act with the aim of empowering people's behavior. The definition that alludes to the process precisely refers to a series of activities or actions that can be carried out systematically and gradually. This series of actions aims to change a society that is still lacking or cannot be categorized as an empowered society or towards empowerment or independence.

Empowring or empowerment in the social science paradigm is interpreted as an effort to meet the needs needed by an individual or community group or also the community itself. The community itself consists of many individuals in a specific area, have bonds of togetherness and interact with each other socially (reference). Therefore, what is then called meeting the needs of the community, including the level of accessibility to resources and other social activities. Basically, empowerment is a means as well as a process of improving the ability and independence of the community.

One of the efforts to empower the community is usually carried out by students and lecturers, this has a correlation with the tridharma of higher education, namely learning, research, and service. The community service system by students is packaged with an activity with the title "Real Work Lecture" or commonly known to the community as KKN. This KKN activity aims to enable students to be able to implement scientific theories in an effort to help the community to be more empowered.

This includes what has been done by researchers during the data collection process. The researcher conducted a community mentoring process with a period of 45 days or 1 month and 2 weeks. By carrying out community activities, one of which is empowering the community with digital activities in various sectors, such as the economy, education, and government. One form of its application is in digital empowerment in the field of MSMEs. This is so that people who have a home business and have been officially registered in the village can buy it with consumers, not only in the village.

2. METHOD

The research method used in this study is to use empirical normative research methods. What is meant by normative is a method used through a literature review system related to research (reference), while empirical is implementing a literature review of field practices (reality) that occur in the community (reference).

The MSME digitization work program in Sukamaju Village is carried out through several stages, which can be generalized into three stages, namely, pre-implementation, training, and mentoring. The three stages were carried out by involving several parties such as village officials, MSME actors, service members, and field supervisors. If some of these parties agree at each stage, then the service team will execute directly to the community in Sukamaju village.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sukamaju Village, Baregbeg District, Ciamis Regency is one of the villages with very diverse community potential. Based on the results of interviews with village officials that we conducted in the pre-implementation period, the potential of the people of Sukamaju village tends to the potential of the community that focuses on the management of agricultural products and livestock, but to the village revealed that the youth group in Sukamaju village predominantly chooses to migrate out of the city with several different factors and reasons. The community of Sukamaju village consists of approximately 4,000 heads of families (Rahman, 2024) According to the head of Sukamaju village, the community of 4,000 heads of families are not all natives born in Sukamaju village, but there are immigrants, and there are also those who live in housing complexes in Sukamaju Village.

Sukamaju Village is divided into four hamlets, namely Village Hamlet, Ciaren Hamlet, Cipaku Hamlet, and Bangunsirna Hamlet, according to the village head of the four villages have similarities, namely the similarity of the community that has Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), MSMEs developed by the people of Sukamaju village, of course, are also diverse such as comring, namely processed oncom and cassava, mustofa which is processed potatoes, a variety of processed fish products, and also saroja, a kind of chips that are fried and floral motifs, apart from these four types of products, there are many other active MSME MSMEs in Sukamaju village and until now are still actively producing their respective products.

In the pre-implementation stage, the service team coordinated with the Sukamaju village, from the coordination the results were obtained that MSME actors in Sukamaju village, Baregbeg District tend not to be very literate about digital operationalization, this is due to the actors who are not so aware of the right marketing conditions for now, as well as the lack of human resources that are so qualified in every existing MSME, And that then makes actors not pay much attention to marketing activities through digital.

Furthermore, the pre-implementation stage process was carried out by observation of several MSMEs in each hamlet, the results of the survey at the pre-implementation stage were obtained that indeed the habits of the marketing process carried out by MSME actors are marketing outside the network, they use digital media only to communicate via WhatsApp, without knowing the existence of other marketing media such as social media and *e-commerce.* This then caused MSME actors in Sukamaju village not to experience market development, only rotating on the existing axis.

After going through the pre-implementation stage in coordination with the village government as well as MSME actors, the researcher coordinated with service members and field supervisors (DPL). In the process of preparing for the next stage, the service team agreed on several field program achievements for each MSME actor who is the target of this program, namely so that MSME actors in Sukamaju village can know various social media that can be used for marketing media, as well as helping MSME actors to make marketing tools that are packaged through workshop activities.

In the process, this stage is carried out by preparing material for seminar activities, of course this seminar activity has the target of MSME actors, as well as the people of Sukamaju village, because this seminar is general with the goal of people who already and do not have a business, as a form of overview and debriefing for the community in compiling and marketing a business through digital media.

The MSME seminar carried out certainly has an impact on the community, they are increasingly aware of several marketing systems carried out through digital media, the existence of this activity makes the people of Sukamaju village, especially those who have managed MSMEs, want to start their new steps by marketing through digital media such as the use of Instagram, WhatsApp, and also TikTok as a marketing medium for MSME actors. In addition to the seminar, the service team also conducted a workshop for the manufacture of marketing tools, this aims to enable MSME actors to make more attractive and more modern packaging, so that the targeted consumers can also be expanded by considering the packaging products sold by the manufacturer.

This training is focused only on the community of MSME actors, there are mustofa MSME actors, comring MSMEs, as well as processed fish MSMEs. This training provides results for MSME actors with their ability to recognize and operate a free and easy-to-use application such as Canva. Canva was introduced to the workshop participants as a medium for creating a multifunctional marketing tool. Through the Canva application, manufacturers can easily and instantly create posters and packaging for their marketing needs.

Through the stages of implementing this training, MSME actors in Sukamaju village have new knowledge, they can use applications with mobile phone access to make posters and packaging, but not only stop in training, the service team also provides assistance to one MSME actor in Sukamaju village, this is done using a *pilot project system,* so that then the MSMEs that are used as objects provide longer and sustainable learning to MSME actors in other Sukamaju villages.

Mentoring activities are carried out to musthofa MSME actors, the strongest driving factor is the existence of young human resources who help musthofa MSMEs, young human resources are the main key in introducing digital marketing to MSMEs, so that they can easily understand *trends* and can quickly adapt to the digital world. The result of this assistance is the existence of several designs of online marketing activities that have been designed by the service team as well as MSME managers, in addition, the service team collaborated with the Village Digital Community Room (RKDD) of Sukamaju village to create a mustofa MSME brand story video as an audio visual media that can be uploaded through several social media.

4. CONCLUSION

The MSME digitization initiative in Sukamaju Village, Baregbeg District, Ciamis Regency shows the importance of technology in encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises. Based on the results of community service, the majority of MSMEs in this hamlet still have minimal knowledge about digital marketing, only rely on WhatsApp to communicate, and have not used other digital platforms such as social media and e-commerce. MSMEs are starting to realize the importance of digital marketing in expanding the market through training and mentoring that focuses on the use of digital media and design programs such as Canva.

Program performance can be measured by increasing MSME actors' understanding of digital marketing tactics and their capacity to develop attractive promotional materials. With further help from the pilot project for MSMEs, Mustofa was able to build a planned marketing strategy as well as visual content such as brand story videos, which increased the visibility of the MSME market. With the formation of the Village Digital Community

Space (RKDD), Sukamaju Village hopes to continue the process and help other MSME actors in adapting to the digital era.

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