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Digital Marketing Training for Indonesian Migrant MSMEs in Malaysia Using Kotler's 5A Framework: A Community Service Program

Pelatihan Digital Marketing bagi UMKM Migran Indonesia di Malaysia Menggunakan Kerangka 5A Kotler: Sebuah Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat

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Abstract

This community service program aimed to improve the digital marketing skills of Indonesian migrant SMEs in Malaysia through training based on Kotler's 5A framework (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, Advocate). Conducted in collaboration with PERMAI Pulau Pinang, the program engaged 43 participants from various business sectors. Training was delivered through interactive sessions, discussions, and practical guidance focused on social media marketing, basic SEO, content creation, and customer engagement. Program effectiveness was measured using a quantitative expectation–performance approach across 12 indicators on a 5-point Likert scale. The results showed an average expectation score of 3.47 and a performance score of 3.32, indicating a small gap (−0.15) and overall alignment with participant expectations. High consistency was found in material relevance, delivery methods, and facilitator competence. However, the largest gap (−0.26) appeared in perceived tangible benefits, suggesting the need for extended implementation time. In conclusion, the training effectively enhanced participants' awareness and understanding of digital marketing strategies. Ongoing mentoring is recommended to support sustainable application and measurable business improvement among Indonesian migrant SMEs.

Keywords: Community Service, Marketing Framework, MSMEs, E-commerce.

Abstract

Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan meningkatkan kemampuan digital marketing UMKM migran Indonesia di Malaysia melalui pelatihan berbasis kerangka 5A Kotler (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, Advocate). Bekerja sama dengan PERMAI Pulau Pinang, pelatihan diikuti oleh 43 pelaku UMKM dari berbagai sektor. Metode pelaksanaan menggunakan pendekatan partisipatif, termasuk presentasi interaktif, diskusi, dan pendampingan praktis terkait media sosial, SEO dasar, pembuatan konten, dan strategi keterlibatan pelanggan. Evaluasi program dilakukan dengan metode expectation–performance terhadap 12 indikator menggunakan skala Likert 5 poin. Hasil menunjukkan rata-rata harapan peserta sebesar 3,47 dan kinerja 3,32, dengan selisih −0,15, menandakan pelatihan berjalan baik dan sesuai harapan. Indikator tertinggi adalah kesesuaian materi, metode penyampaian, dan kompetensi fasilitator, sedangkan kesenjangan terbesar terdapat pada manfaat nyata pelatihan. Secara umum, pelatihan ini efektif meningkatkan kesadaran dan pemahaman peserta terhadap strategi digital marketing. Namun, dibutuhkan tindak lanjut berupa pendampingan implementatif untuk memperkuat dampak dan keberlanjutan penerapan strategi pemasaran digital dalam pengembangan UMKM imigran.

Kata Kunci: *Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat, Kerangka Kerja Pemasaran, UMKM, E-commerce.*

1. Introduction

Malaysia has long been a destination for Indonesian immigrants seeking better employment opportunities and financial stability, particularly in sectors such as construction, plantations, manufacturing, and domestic services (Hugo, 2014; Rahman & Kaur, 2020). Despite their economic contributions, a significant number of Indonesian migrant workers continue to face financial challenges, job insecurity, and limited opportunities for career advancement. In response to these conditions, some Indonesian migrants have turned to entrepreneurship by establishing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a means of generating additional income and achieving financial independence.

SMEs play an important role in improving the economic conditions of migrant communities, supporting families in their home country, and contributing to local economic development (OECD, 2019; Kurniawan, Logaiswari, & Kohar, 2023). Common business activities among Indonesian migrant SMEs include food stalls, catering services, traditional crafts, online selling, and small retail shops. However, operating SMEs in a foreign country presents various challenges, including limited capital, legal constraints, intense market competition, and inadequate business management knowledge (Ni, 2022).

The main problems faced by Indonesian migrant SMEs in Malaysia are the low level of digital marketing utilization, limited understanding of strategic digital marketing practices, and the absence of structured guidance for sustainable implementation. Previous studies have shown that limited digital literacy and inadequate digital marketing capabilities significantly hinder SME competitiveness and market expansion (Aghazadeh & Khoshnevis, 2024; Zamri, Rahim, & Norizan, 2024). Preliminary observations and data collection involving 20 Indonesian migrant SME actors indicate that only 15% actively utilize digital platforms for business promotion, while 70% report a lack of knowledge regarding Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and effective social media marketing strategies. One strategy for understanding market aspects is to conduct market testing which can use questionnaires so that the product to be sold is the right product for the target market (Rochmad et al., 2025). These conditions have resulted in stagnant sales growth, limited market reach, and suboptimal business performance.

Digital marketing has been widely recognized as an effective strategy to enhance SME competitiveness, expand market access, and improve customer engagement at relatively low cost (Wilson, 2019; Kurniawan et al., 2023). Therefore, this community service activity is designed to strengthen the digital marketing capacity of Indonesian migrant SMEs in Malaysia through structured training based on the 5A framework (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, and Advocate), which emphasizes customer journey–oriented marketing and long-term customer relationships (Busca & Bertrandias, 2019; Gusty & Darniyus, 2025). The activity aims to improve participants' understanding of digital marketing concepts, enhance practical skills in implementing digital marketing strategies, and support sustainable SME development by expanding market reach, increasing customer engagement, and improving perceived business performance through consistent and effective use of digital platforms.

2. Method

This community service activity employed a participatory training approach aimed at strengthening the digital marketing capabilities of Indonesian migrant Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. The program was conducted through structured training sessions combined with discussions and evaluation to ensure both knowledge transfer and participant engagement. The digital marketing training was designed using the 5A framework (Aware,

Appeal, Ask, Act, and Advocate) as a practical guideline for guiding SMEs in understanding customer journeys and applying digital marketing strategies in a structured manner.

Training activities are carried out to expand the understanding of partners and training participants with solutions to solve problems:

1. Pre-Activity:
    - Partner needs assessment through surveys and interviews.
    - Preparation of training materials and modules.
2. Implementation (1-Day Workshop):
    - Morning session: Digital marketing and SEO theory.
    - Midday session: Hands-on social media and marketplace integration.
    - Afternoon session: Content creation workshop and performance evaluation tools.
3. Post-Activity:
    - Evaluation through questionnaires and interviews.
    - Final report.

This activity's output goal is to improve community skills as well as the competitiveness of small industries so that they can continue to develop with major strategies. The participants of this activity consisted of Indonesian migrant SME actors operating in various business sectors, including food services, retail, handicrafts, and online trading. A total of 43 participants were involved in the activity and voluntarily participated in all stages of the program. Prior to the training implementation, preliminary observations and informal interviews were conducted to identify participants' business conditions, levels of digital literacy, and existing use of digital marketing platforms. These observations served as the basis for designing training materials that were relevant to participants' needs and business contexts.

The training activities were delivered through interactive presentations, case-based explanations, and guided discussions. Participants were introduced to practical digital marketing applications, including the use of social media platforms, basic Search Engine Optimization (SEO) concepts, content creation strategies, and customer engagement techniques aligned with the 5A framework. The delivery emphasized practical understanding rather than theoretical depth, considering the diverse educational and business backgrounds of the participants.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the community service activity, a quantitative evaluation method was employed using an expectation–performance approach. Participants were asked to complete a structured questionnaire at the end of the activity, measuring both their expectations and perceived performance of the program across 12 evaluation indicators (P1–P12). The indicators covered aspects such as relevance of materials, clarity of delivery, applicability of the content, perceived benefits, facilitator competence, participant engagement, and overall satisfaction. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated very low and 5 indicated very high.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively by calculating mean scores for expectation and performance for each indicator. The gap between expectation and performance was then examined to identify areas where the program met participant expectations and areas requiring improvement. This evaluation approach provided a quantitative basis for assessing participant satisfaction and identifying opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of future digital marketing training programs for Indonesian migrant SMEs.

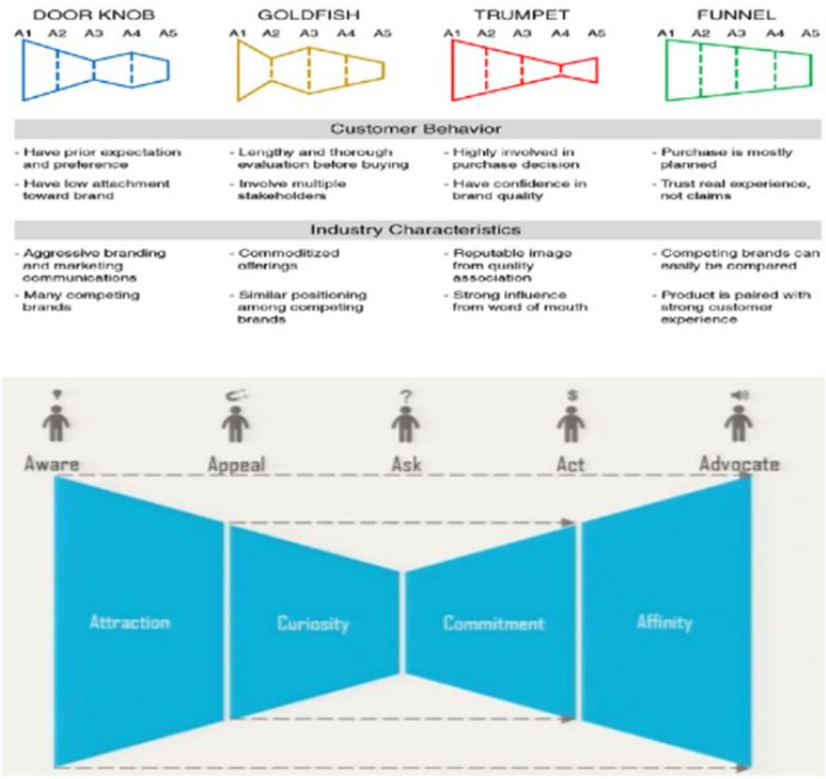
3. Results and Discussion

The implementation of the community service activity received a positive response from participants toward the digital marketing training delivered using the 5A framework. Observations during the training sessions indicated an increased awareness among participants regarding the importance of understanding the customer journey, particularly the transition from initial awareness to customer advocacy.

Participants gained clearer insights into how digital marketing strategies influence customer behavior at each stage of the 5A process. At the aware and appeal stages, participants recognized the role of consistent social media presence and visually engaging content in attracting potential customers. Many participants acknowledged that prior to the training, they primarily relied on word-of-mouth promotion and had limited experience with structured digital marketing strategies.

At the ask and act stages, participants demonstrated improved understanding of managing customer interactions through social media messages, comments, and online reviews to support purchase decisions. Several participants stated that customer engagement had not previously been considered part of a deliberate marketing strategy. The presentation materials shown in Picture 1 assisted participants in visualizing practical applications of the 5A framework within their daily business activities.

Furthermore, the advocate stage was identified as a relatively new concept for most participants. Through the training, participants became aware that satisfied customers could actively contribute to business growth by sharing testimonials, online reviews, and product recommendations. This shift in perspective reflects a meaningful outcome of the activity, as participants began to view long-term customer relationships as strategic assets rather than focusing solely on one-time transactions.



Picture 1. 5A framework (Kotler, 2016)

To quantitatively evaluate participant perceptions of the activity, a post-training questionnaire was distributed in the Indonesian language to ensure clarity and ease of understanding. The questionnaire measured participants' expectations and perceived performance of the training across 12 evaluation indicators using a 5-point Likert scale. The results of this evaluation are presented and discussed in the following section.

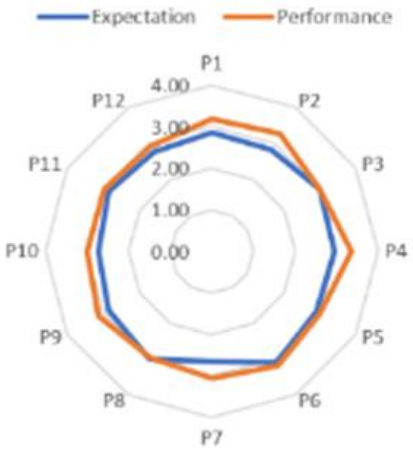
Table 2. List of Questionnaire

No.	Question
1	The materials of the community service activities are in accordance with the problems faced by the community
	The methods of community service used are appropriate to the theme and objectives of the program
2	Supporting facilities and infrastructure for community service activities, such as the venue, equipment, materials, and other supporting facilities, are adequate
	The implementation team of the community service program appears cohesive in carrying out the activities
3	The implementation team of the community service program has competence in the materials delivered
	The implementation team presents the community service program in an engaging manner
4	The community is enthusiastic in participating in the community service activities
	The community greatly benefits from the community service program provided
5	The community shows great interest and enthusiasm towards the community service activities
	Overall, the community feels satisfied with the community service program conducted
6	The community service program meets the expectations of the community
7	The materials of the community service activities are in accordance with the problems faced by the community
	The methods of community service used are appropriate to the theme and objectives of the program
8	Supporting facilities and infrastructure for community service activities, such as the venue, equipment, materials, and other supporting facilities, are adequate
	The implementation team of the community service program appears cohesive in carrying out the activities
9	The implementation team of the community service program has competence in the materials delivered
	The implementation team presents the community service program in an engaging manner
10	The community is enthusiastic in participating in the community service activities
	The community greatly benefits from the community service program provided
11	The community shows great interest and enthusiasm towards the community service activities
	Overall, the community feels satisfied with the community service program conducted
12	The community service program meets the expectations of the community

Based on Picture 2, the Expectation vs Performance chart presents a detailed comparison between participants' expectation and perceived performance (satisfaction) levels across 12 evaluation indicators (P1–P12) measured using a 5-point Likert scale, involving 43 respondents. This evaluation provides an overview of how far the implementation of the digital marketing community service activity fulfilled participant expectations.

Overall, the results indicate that the program was implemented effectively, as reflected by a relatively small difference between the overall mean expectation score (3.47) and the mean performance score (3.32), resulting in an average gap of −0.15. This suggests that the training activities largely met participant expectations, while also indicating the presence of specific aspects that require further improvement to enhance program impact.

Indicators P1–P4, which relate to material relevance, clarity of explanation, implementation methods, and alignment of the training with participant needs, demonstrate relatively high expectation levels (approximately 3.55–3.65) with performance scores closely aligned (approximately 3.40–3.55). The small gaps observed in these indicators indicate that participants perceived the training content as relevant and the delivery methods as effective. This finding confirms that the design of the training materials and the facilitation approach were appropriate for the characteristics and needs of Indonesian migrant SMEs in Malaysia



Picture 2. Expectation vs Performance diagram illustrating the comparison between participants' expectation and perceived performance levels

A more noticeable gap emerges in indicators P5–P7, which are associated with participants' ability to understand, apply, and internalize the digital marketing material provided. Although performance scores in this group remain at a moderate level, the gap between expectation and performance suggests that some participants experienced difficulties in translating the knowledge gained into immediate business practice. This condition may be attributed to limited training duration, varying levels of digital literacy, and differences in business scale among participants.

The largest gap is observed in indicator P8, which relates to the perceived tangible benefits of the training. With an expectation score of 3.42 and a performance score of 3.16, the resulting gap of −0.26 indicates that while the training was considered informative and engaging, its direct impact on short-term business outcomes had not yet been fully realized by all participants. This finding highlights a common challenge in community service programs, where improvements in knowledge and awareness may not immediately translate into measurable business performance, especially without continued assistance.

In contrast, indicators P9–P12, which assess facilitator competence, team coordination, participant enthusiasm, and overall satisfaction, show relatively small gaps between expectation and performance. These results suggest that the facilitators were perceived as competent and that the learning environment successfully encouraged active participation and interaction among participants. Such positive perceptions are important supporting factors for the effectiveness and sustainability of future training activities.

Picture 3. Community Service activity

Overall, the expectation–performance comparison confirms that the digital marketing training program was positively received and successfully addressed key learning objectives related to digital marketing awareness and customer-oriented strategies. However, the presence of performance gaps, particularly in indicators related to practical benefits and implementation, emphasizes the need for implementation-oriented follow-up activities, such as hands-on mentoring, practical workshops, or continuous guidance. These follow-up efforts are essential to ensure that the digital marketing knowledge and skills acquired during the training can be applied effectively and sustainably by Indonesian migrant SME participants.

4. Conclusion

This community service activity demonstrates that structured digital marketing training can effectively support Indonesian migrant SMEs in Malaysia in understanding and adopting customer-oriented marketing practices. The implementation of the 5A framework enabled participants to better recognize the importance of guiding customers from initial awareness to long-term advocacy, which is essential for sustainable business development in a competitive market environment.

The findings indicate that while the training successfully enhanced participant awareness and engagement, the translation of knowledge into immediate business application remains a key challenge. This suggests that knowledge-based interventions alone are not sufficient to ensure measurable business impact, particularly among SMEs with diverse backgrounds and limited digital experience. Therefore, practical reinforcement through continued mentoring and hands-on assistance is necessary to bridge the gap between conceptual understanding and real-world implementation.

Overall, the community service program highlights the relevance of digital marketing capacity-building initiatives for Indonesian migrant SMEs. Future activities should prioritize implementation-oriented approaches and longer engagement periods to ensure that digital marketing strategies can be applied consistently and contribute to sustainable SME growth.

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