

Strengthening *Brand Identity* and *Brand Communication* on MSMEs in Increasing Competitiveness in the Digital Business Era

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Abstract

This community service program aimed to enhance the understanding and skills of MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise) owners in developing brand identity and brand communication to improve business competitiveness in the digital business era. The program was conducted offline on June 12, 2026, at Telkom University Surabaya Campus and involved 25 MSMEs fostered by Telkom CDC Witel SBS. The methods employed included interactive workshops, hands-on practice, mentoring, and evaluation. The training materials covered the development of positioning and value propositions, tagline creation, marketing caption writing, storytelling techniques, and the utilization of digital media for business promotion. The results indicated an improvement in participants' ability to build strong brand identities and develop more effective, persuasive, and consistent marketing communications. This program contributed positively to strengthening brand image and enhancing MSMEs' readiness to compete in the era of business digital.

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1. INTRODUCTION

MSMEs play a crucial role in the Indonesian economy. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2023), the number of MSMEs in Indonesia has reached over 64 million, contributing over 60% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing approximately 97% of the workforce. This confirms that MSMEs are the backbone of the national economy, playing a role in creating jobs and maintaining economic stability. However, despite their significant contribution, MSMEs still face various challenges, particularly in navigating digital transformation in an era of increasingly competitive competition (Tambunan, 2019).

Through Telkom CDC Witel SBS, we serve as a strategic partner, supporting a range of MSMEs across sectors such as culinary, fashion, handicrafts, and household products. These assisted MSMEs essentially possess products with potential for quality and local wisdom. However, most entrepreneurs have diverse educational backgrounds and business experience, resulting in uneven levels of digital literacy and understanding of modern marketing strategies. Katadata Study *Insight Center* (2021) shows that low digital literacy is one of the main obstacles in optimizing MSME marketing, especially for business actors of middle to older productive age.

As consumer behavior shifts toward digital transformation, the challenges faced by MSMEs are no longer limited to technological access but also to their ability to build brand-based competitiveness. Today's consumers, particularly the younger generation, increasingly use digital platforms to discover, compare, and make purchasing decisions (Google & Temasek, 2022).

Digitalization has the potential to significantly increase MSME revenue by expanding market reach (McKinsey, 2020). However, these opportunities have not been fully exploited by the MSMEs being mentored due to a gap between product quality and the brand management strategies being implemented.

Based on the results of initial observations and discussions with partners, it was found that the main problem of the MSMEs fostered by Telkom CDC South Surabaya lies in the strengthening of brand identity and brand communication. From a brand identity perspective, content hasn't been designed to reflect the company's positioning, values, and differentiation. Yet, content is a crucial element influencing consumer perceptions of quality and purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Apart from that, most of the MSME actors do not have a tagline that represents a value proposition clearly. Products are marketed without a strong value proposition and without structured differentiation from competitors. In digital marketing practices, communication remains passive, limited to uploading product photos without a consistent and persuasive messaging strategy. The caption that is used has not integrated the approach of storytelling, which is able to build emotional closeness and strengthen brand image.

Another problem is suboptimal product visualization. Product photos are often taken without considering lighting, composition, and appropriateness to the desired brand image. Unprofessional visuals negatively impact content appeal and undermine consumer trust in a highly competitive digital ecosystem. This leads to products competing solely on price, rather than added value, perceived value. Without a strong brand identity and communication, MSMEs will find it difficult to improve their positioning and expand their market share sustainably.

Therefore, a community service program is needed that focuses on strengthening brand identity and brand communication for Telkom-assisted MSMEs. This program is designed to help business actors improve their product content based on positioning, formulate taglines as a representation of brand value and differentiation, as well as developing digital communication strategies through caption and storytelling. With this strategic approach, it is hoped that MSMEs will be able to improve their brand image, strengthen their competitiveness, and optimize growth opportunities in the digital era.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The community service activity was held offline on Friday, June 12, 2026, at the Telkom University Surabaya Campus. Twenty-five Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) under the guidance of Telkom CDC Witel SBS, from various business sectors such as culinary, fashion, crafts, and household products, participated in the activity. The program was designed to improve participants' understanding and skills in building brand identity as well as brand communication, which is effective as an effort to increase business competitiveness in the digital era.

This community service implementation method is designed to ensure that MSMEs under the guidance of Telkom CDC Witel SBS not only understand the theory but also are able to practice their skills directly. The approach used is *workshop*, interactive, hands-on practice, mentoring *on-site*, as well as the development of a simple guide that can be used after the activity is completed. The stages of the community service method can be seen in Figure 1 below:

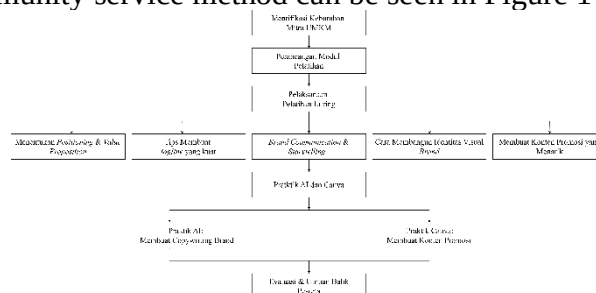


Figure 1. Community Service Flow

This approach was chosen to ensure that the program implemented aligns with the partners' actual needs and can produce applicable and sustainable solutions. The activity stages include identifying needs and designing materials, *workshop*, implementation *workshop*, mentoring *on-site*, and evaluation.

Identify Needs

Coordinate with Telkom CDC and MSME actors to explore the main problems related to product content, *positioning*, *tagline*, and the digital communication patterns currently in place. At this stage, a simple brand audit is conducted on the content, social media visuals, and captions used.

Material Design Workshop

Material *workshop* focused on strengthening *brand identity* and *brand communication*, *practically*, including analysis, *positioning*, and *value proposition product*, refining content concepts to align with target *market*, formulation of *tagline* which represents the uniqueness of the product, the arrangement of *captions* short, interesting, and persuasive, *storytelling techniques* to build emotional closeness with consumers, and to develop visual content concepts to be more consistent and professional.



Figure 2. Module View

The training module consists of four main parts, namely (1) introduction to the concept of brand identity and the importance of branding for MSMEs in increasing competitiveness in the digital business era, (2) determining *positioning* and *value proposition* as a basis for forming a strong brand identity, (3) compiling *tagline* and development of *brand communication* through technique *storytelling* and (4) creating persuasive marketing captions, and (5) applying brand identity to digital promotional content through the use of Canva, ChatGPT, and social media. Each material is delivered in stages and followed by hands-on practice sessions, so participants can implement the concepts learned according to the characteristics of their respective businesses.

Implementation Workshop

The implementation *workshop* is done through theory sessions and direct practice. In the theory session, participants are given an understanding of the basic concepts of *brand identity* and *brand communication*, the importance of *positioning* and *perceived value*, as well as the role of content and brand messages in increasing product competitiveness. In the practical session, participants re-conceptualized content, formulated a *tagline*, and made examples *caption* and *storytelling* according to the characteristics of each product. The activity also includes interactive discussions to obtain input and refine the concept *brand*, which has been planned.

Mentoring Onsite

Mentoring is carried out after the *workshop* to ensure strategy *branding* that have been formulated can be implemented consistently. The team provides direct guidance in finalizing the *tagline*, content improvement, compilation *caption* digital, as well as adjusting brand communications on social media to align with the *positioning* that has been set.

Evaluation

The activity evaluation was conducted by assessing changes in participants' skills before and after the workshop. This assessment was conducted through direct observation of the quality of content design, social media copywriting, and the level of understanding of the MSMEs

participating in the training. The results of this evaluation serve as a basis for the community service team in providing recommendations for improvements for MSMEs and providing input for refining similar community service programs in the future.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening Brand Identity and Brand Communication at the Telkom CDC Witel SBS Fostered MSMEs, which was carried out interactively through a *workshop* by combining material delivery, discussion, and hands-on practice. The activity began with a presentation on the importance of strengthening *brand identity* and *brand communication* on MSMEs in increasing competitiveness in the digital business era, as shown in Figure 3. In this session, participants were invited to understand that today's consumers not only consider product quality, but also brand identity and communication built by business actors.



Figure 3. Material Presentation Session

Next, in the discussion session, participants asked various questions related to the problems faced in running a business, as shown in Figure 4. Most of the questions concerned how to build a brand identity that can differentiate products from competitors, especially for MSMEs offering similar products in the same market. In response, the speaker explained the importance of determining *positioning* and *value proposition*, which is clear, so that the product has characteristics and advantages that are easily recognized by consumers.



Figure 4. Discussion session

In addition to the discussion session, participants also participated in a hands-on practice to implement the material provided, as shown in Figure 5. In this activity, participants identified their respective products by determining the value they wanted to convey to consumers. The results of this identification were used as the basis for formulating a product *positioning* and *value proposition business*. Throughout the process, the presenters provided guidance and feedback to participants to ensure the concepts developed met expectations. This activity helped participants understand the importance of product differentiation as the basis for developing brand identity.



Figure 5. Practical Session

The next activity is focused on formulating *taglines* as a representation of brand identity. Participants compile a *tagline* that is short, easy to remember, and able to describe the advantages of the product. Several participants presented their results, *taglines* that have been created, and received feedback from the presenters and other participants. Through this activity, participants gained an understanding of the importance of message consistency in building a strong, recognizable brand image for consumers.

On the aspect of *brand communication*, participants do exercises in composing social media captions and *storytelling* for a product. Based on the example posts used so far, participants developed captions that not only explained the product's characteristics but also highlighted its benefits, value, and the story behind it. The results of the exercise showed that participants were beginning to be able to craft more persuasive and communicative marketing messages compared to previous communication patterns that tended to focus solely on product information. Furthermore, participants also understood the importance of *storytelling* as a strategy to build emotional closeness with consumers.

The implementation *workshop* demonstrated the participants' high enthusiasm for learning branding strategies relevant to digital business development. The interactions during the activity indicated that MSMEs recognize the importance of building a brand identity to increase product value and differentiate themselves from competitors. This aligns with OECD (2021) findings, which state that digital transformation in MSMEs is not only related to technology adoption but also the ability to develop business strategies, marketing, and brand management that can enhance business competitiveness.

At the session of *brand identity*, participants began to understand that marketing success is not only determined by product quality, but also by the business's ability to build *positioning*. A clear understanding. The process of identifying product advantages helps participants recognize unique characteristics that can serve as the basis for building a brand identity. These findings indicate that many MSMEs actually possess strong differentiation potential, but this has not been optimally communicated to consumers. These findings align with research by Tambunan (2019), which explains that one of the main challenges faced by MSMEs in Indonesia is limited managerial and marketing capacity, often preventing them from converting their product potential into a sustainable competitive advantage.

On the aspect of *brand communication*, changes are visible in the participants' ability to compose *captions* and *storytelling* more structured. Before the *workshop*, most participants only used social media as a means of showcasing products. After the training, participants understood that digital communication must be able to convey the benefits, value, and story behind a product in order to build consumer engagement. This capability is crucial because competition in the digital era requires MSMEs to build more personal relationships with customers. According to the OECD (2021), the use of social media is a crucial *platform*. Effective digital marketing requires communication skills that can create engagement and build long-term relationships with consumers.

Overall, *the workshop* provides a hands-on learning experience for participants because each topic is immediately followed by practice and feedback. This approach makes it easier for participants to understand branding concepts and apply them according to their business

characteristics. The results of the activity indicate that strengthening brand identity and brand communication can be an effective strategy in increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs, especially in facing market dynamics and changing consumer behavior in the digital business era. These findings support the views of PwC Indonesia (2022) and the OECD (2021) that the success of MSME digital transformation is determined not only by the use of technology, but also by the ability to build a strong brand identity and effective marketing communications.

4. CONCLUSION

Community service activities in the form of *workshops*, *Strengthening Brand Identity* and *Brand Communication*. The program for MSMEs under the guidance of Telkom CDC Witel SBS was successfully implemented and received high enthusiasm from participants. Through activities including material delivery, discussions, hands-on practice, and mentoring, participants gained a better understanding of the importance of building brand identity and effective marketing communications in facing business competition in the digital era.

The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' ability to identify *positioning* and *value* proposition of the product, formulate a tagline, which represents business excellence, and compile captions and storytelling more engaging, persuasive, and in line with brand characteristics. Participants also began to understand that marketing success is determined not only by product quality, but also by the ability to consistently convey product value and differentiation to consumers.

This program provides a positive contribution in increasing the capacity of MSMEs fostered by Telkom CDC Witel SBS in building *brand identity* and *brand communication*. *Strengthening* these aspects is expected to enhance brand image, expand market reach, and sustainably increase the competitiveness of MSMEs in the era of digital transformation.

5. SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the activities that have been implemented, it is recommended that the capacity-building program for MSMEs fostered by Telkom CDC Witel SBS be carried out sustainably through more comprehensive mentoring and advanced training. These activities can be focused on developing product innovation, competitive pricing strategies, and increasing understanding of business legality and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Strengthening these aspects is expected to complement the efforts to develop brand identity and brand communication that have been carried out, so that MSMEs are not only able to build a strong brand image, but also increase product added value, expand market opportunities, and create sustainable competitive advantages in the digital era.

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