LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A DIGITAL MARKETING TOOL FOR AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS IN MOJOLABAN DISTRICT

Aristyani Safitri[1], Sri Padmantyo [2]

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

Keywords:
Digital marketing, social media, agriculture

***Correspondence Address:**
B100200455@student.ums.ac.id
Sp102@ums.ac.id

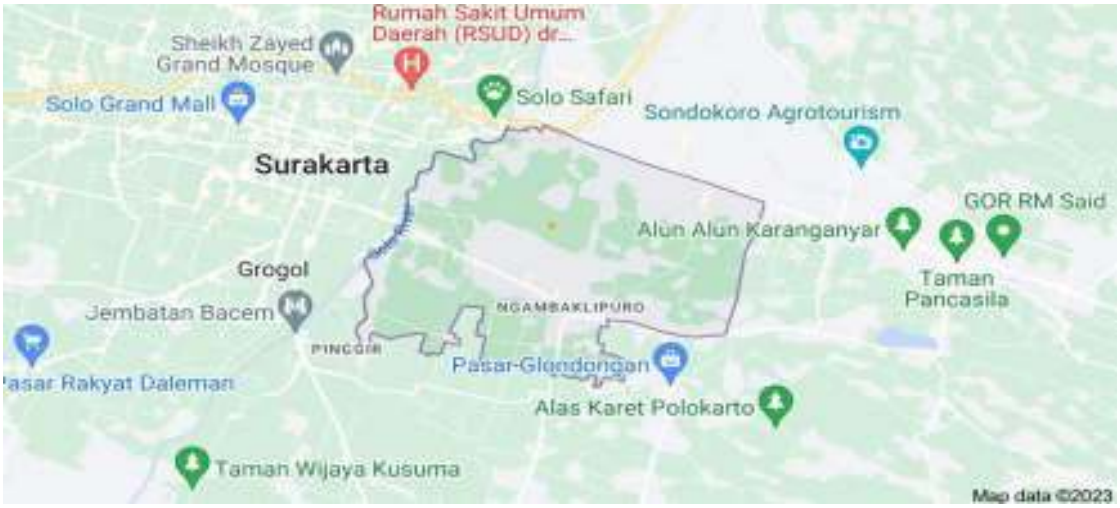
Abstract: In the epoch of globalization, where technological strides redefine industries, marketing has transformed, notably through the advent of cutting-edge digital methods. This community service initiative aims to gauge the pivotal role digital marketing plays in revolutionizing the agricultural sector. Through direct outreach and counseling, we engage with a group of farmers, probing into their existing crop-selling practices. Our mission is to unveil innovative solutions harnessing digital marketing techniques, empowering farmers with efficient tools to connect their produce with consumers, and fostering a new era of agricultural commerce.

INTRODUCTION

Mojolaban District is located in Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java Province. The total area of Mojolaban District is recorded at 3,554 hectares or approximately 7.62% of the total area of Sukoharjo Regency (46,666 hectares). The area comprises 2,169 hectares (61.02%) of rice fields and 1,385 hectares (38.97%) of non-rice fields. This percentage is the highest compared to the percentage of other non-rice field land uses. The annual rainfall in the region is 1,652 mm, with an average annual rainfall of 16 mm. Some of the residents of Mojolaban District utilize this average rainfall by working as rice farmers. With a larger agricultural area compared to non-agricultural land, the community there can prosper through the results of agriculture. Some young farmers actively participate in farming alongside other experienced farmers.

The majority of Mojolaban District is a productive and fertile area. This is due to its geographical structure as a highland area with an elevation of 104 meters above sea level. The distance from west to east is approximately 8.0 km, and the distance from north to south is approximately 6.0 km. The administrative center of Mojolaban District includes villages such as Gadingan, Palur, Triyagan, Joho, Sapen,

Kragilan, Klumprit, Cangkol, Bekonang, Demakan, Wirun, Dukuh, Plumbon, Laban, and Tegalmade. The boundaries of the district are as follows: North - Jaten District, Karanganyar Regency; East - Jaten District, Karanganyar Regency; South - Polokarto District; West - Pasar Kliwon District, Surakarta City. The map below shows the location of Mojolaban District, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java Province.



1st pict. Maps of Mojolaban District

However, the vast expanse of rice fields also gives rise to several issues in the buying and selling of agricultural products. After the harvest season, farmers sell their produce to intermediaries or collectors, and they are forced to sell at low prices. These middlemen then sell to consumers at much higher prices. This is regrettable, considering that the work of farmers is not easy, and unpredictable weather conditions can lead to crop failures. Currently, many farmers need to leverage information technology to support marketing activities despite the prevalence of the Internet and social media in Indonesian society (Intan et al., 2019). Media is considered the best promotion tool as it presents various images through media to communities and the public. Information updates can be done at any time, and, most importantly, it can lead to an average sales volume increase of 100% (Priadani, 2018)

Farmers are forced to sell their harvest to intermediaries or collectors because they are still determining how to sell directly to a broader consumer base. If farmers could sell their produce directly to consumers, the profits would be greater than dealing with intermediaries who buy their harvest at low prices and resell them at higher prices.

Information technology to enhance the marketing of agricultural products shows that 55.56% of farmers' produce is already bought by intermediaries even before the harvest season arrives. Farmers unaware of direct selling information surrender their crops to intermediaries, resulting in many farmers being disadvantaged when their harvest is bought by intermediaries (Yuantari et al., 2016). This business chain is highly detrimental to farmers, especially those who only cultivate rented land owned by others.

For example, farmers in Sapen Village, Mojolaban Sub-District, only sell their rice to intermediaries at low prices. The low selling price at the farmer level is due to the long distribution chain and the farmers' dependence on intermediaries. Additionally, many trading institutions or merchants are involved in the distribution process, leading to high final consumer prices. Farmers are even forced to sell in certain conditions before harvest. The farmers need to learn how to find consumers, even though the mobile phones they use are already capable of doing so online through social media. According to Bojkić et al. (2016), their research shows a very low interest and knowledge level in digital marketing, agricultural marketing, and agricultural applications among farmers. Digital marketing plays a major and key role in doubling farm income, a central government vision (Reddy, 2021). Farmers are confused about how to utilize technology to reach consumers other than intermediaries or collectors who buy their harvest at a low price. Farmers in Sapen Village, Mojolaban Sub-District, prefer what they consider an easy and uncomplicated way, even though the results are lesser due to selling their harvest at low prices.

The low level of regeneration of young farmers also hinders the entry and development of technology in the agricultural sector in a village. Regeneration is defined as the continuous replacement process of community groups (Soerjono, 1993). The role of young farmers or millennial farmers is crucial for developing the agricultural sector. However, young people need to be more willing to engage in farming, considering it an unappealing occupation. The stigma that farming is only about hoeing is still prevalent. People perceive farming as less promising because many farmers are economically in the middle to lower class. It is rare to find farmers with an upper-middle-class economic status. The low interest of young generations in farming is evident from the statistic that 61% of farmers are above 45 years old. If this is addressed promptly, achieving national food security will be easy.

Farmers utilize living resources to produce food, raw materials for industry, or energy sources and manage the environment to meet their living needs using traditional and modern tools (Hakim, 2018). Generally, agriculture refers to human activities, including cultivation, livestock farming, fisheries, and forestry. In a narrow sense, farmers are also defined as those cultivating specific crops on a plot of land, especially seasonal crops. The farming profession is being abandoned because many young generations are more interested in working in non-agricultural sectors, resulting in low farmer regeneration. In the Mojolaban Sub-District, millennial farmers aged 19-39 play a passive role in the agricultural business, particularly in marketing. According to Safira (2022), the presence of millennial farmers can increase innovation in society, especially in the field of employment, and produce entrepreneurs regardless of age. The agricultural sector is expected to adapt to technology and information so that millennial farmers will become pioneers. However, due to the perception that farming is less promising, they are not interested in developing agricultural businesses.

As individuals who care about the welfare of farmers, it is only right for us to contribute to solving these issues using our knowledge of digital technology. The solution I propose as a student regarding the issues mentioned in the background above is to provide socialization or an introduction to technological advancements to help traders market their products to a wider audience. Not only socialization, but farmers will also immediately apply it to the products they sell. According to Rebecca (2016) and Utami (2020), digital marketing provides a broader opportunity.

For entrepreneurs to brand their products, make them well-known, and establish a unique place in the public's hearts. Thus, people will not easily switch to other products. In summary, online marketing means that people can easily learn about the products offered by sellers, attract potential buyers, compare them with other products before making offers, advertise more easily and inexpensively, and reach a very large market (Mahedy, 2016). According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), socialization is a community member learning to recognize and appreciate society's culture within its environment. Another definition of socialization is an activity used to educate individuals or groups to change behavior according to desired behavior. This socialization is expected to enhance the skills of the community, especially farmers, so that they can market their agricultural products to a broader audience.

RESEARCH METHODS

As a person who cares about these issues, what Researcher can do to share knowledge about the field of digital marketing is as follows:

1. Presentation of Material

Presenting material on digital marketing introduces the audience to digital marketing. In addition to introducing the topic, presenting material aims to increase the audience's interest in digital marketing, prompting them to practice it directly. The material covers only the basics of digital marketing, such as its benefits, tools or media used, and effective strategies. Participants are taught how to create content that can attract buyers by showcasing the advantages of the products being sold. Engaging content can capture consumers' attention, and positive perceptions will naturally arise if the offered content appeals to them.

2. Discussion Session

After completing the material presentation, researchers invite the farmers to engage in a discussion on digital marketing. In this discussion session, researchers will listen to any questions or concerns the farmers may have about digital marketing. In addition to asking questions, farmers can also directly practice how to conduct

Digital marketing using the smartphones they have. This session will reveal how well the farmers understand the material when they apply it immediately. Active participation from the farmers makes the activity engaging, and the material is easily understood because it is directly put into practice. Farmers can also provide feedback and discuss issues related to selling their agricultural products.

3. Conclusion

A brief recap of what was learned will be provided at this stage. This stage also involves an evaluation to assess how well the audience understands the material presented earlier

2nd pict. Methods

Before the training, a consultation phase is carried out in the first week to analyze the issues the partner team faces. The team consults with mentors to collectively find solutions and identify target areas that can be addressed through community service. Subsequently, a collaborative mechanism is established with the Agricultural Extension

Office (BPP) of Mojolaban Sub-District to implement a digital marketing training program to support agricultural business activities that can be implemented directly. During this stage, consultations are also conducted with students majoring in agriculture to understand specific issues in the field and analyze the methods of socialization used to provide knowledge related to financial technology. The socialization material is presented in non-formal language to ensure that farmers receive and understand the information. The content includes definitions of digital marketing, its benefits, its use, and what farmers should and should not do when marketing products digitally to facilitate sales.

The socialization program and the implementation of digital marketing are carried out through meetings at least once a month to monitor progress each month until the desired results are achieved. After all meetings in the month are completed, the process continues with the evaluation of each meeting. The purpose of this

Evaluation measures how farmers understand and implement digital marketing in their daily lives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

. Societalization is done with the Agricultural Extension Office of Mojolaban Sub-District and the Yogyakarta Agricultural Polytechnic. The socialization involves 30 farmers from Mojolaban Sub-District and takes place on Wednesday, May 23, 2023, from 08:00 to completion at Sapen Village in one of the farmers' houses. The socialization is divided into two sessions, each lasting 60 minutes. In the first session, the presentation covers the introduction to digital marketing and the benefits of using digital marketing for agricultural business practitioners. After the introduction, farmers are invited to examine the relationship between the theory of technology utilization and the current facts or issues they face. For example, why farmers need innovation in marketing their products. This is because many farmers still need to understand how to market products directly to consumers without going through intermediaries, and many need to grasp the benefits of digital marketing in the agricultural sector. Afterward, farmers are encouraged to use technology in digital marketing directly through their smartphones by downloading and using social media. Farmers are guided to try downloading one of the social media apps on their digital devices. In the Mojolaban Sub-District, farmers already have modern phones but need to fully understand the process of using and utilizing this technology in their business. At this stage, farmers are trained directly to

run social media on their smartphones after downloading the application. The suggested application for farmers to use is Facebook.

In the second session, farmers are asked to recap their experiences and training from the first session. At this stage, farmers begin to understand the definition and benefits of digital marketing for businesses in the agricultural sector. After that, farmers are given questions to assess how deeply they have grasped the material. Each farmer answers briefly regarding the material presented in the first and second sessions. Farmers now understand digital marketing is about offering or selling a product through social media. They also understand how to promote their products by highlighting their unique features. With the existence of buying and selling forums or communities on Facebook, farmers can emulate other traders who have already marketed their products using the application. In this second session, farmers collaborate to help each other market their products on social media.

The second session, part of the concluding session, states that farmers are interested in digital marketing but need to learn how to start. Even though their tools are adequate for continuous digital marketing, they still need to learn more, considering the age of the farmers there who are still young. The role of the younger generation living there is highly expected to help facilitate successful digital marketing.

3rd pict. Socialization Process

The socialization activities conducted in Mojolaban District, in collaboration with the Agricultural Extension Center (BPP) of Mojolaban District, have revealed that digital marketing using technology for farmers in Mojolaban has yet to be optimally developed. This is due to the farmers' limited knowledge of the technology that can support marketing. Many farmers there rely on intermediaries to sell their harvests. However, the farmers have the potential to sell directly to consumers at higher prices

than what they usually sell to intermediaries. These farmers already have digital marketing support tools, such as smartphones, but they have yet to utilize them fully in digital marketing. However, with consistent training or socialization on digital marketing, farmers can become more. Open to technological advancements, especially in marketing for the agricultural sector.

By utilizing digital marketing appropriately, it can provide the following benefits:

1. Wide Market Access: With digital marketing, farmers can reach a broader and more potential market worldwide. They can use online platforms such as websites, electronic markets, or social media to promote their agricultural products to potential customers in various locations. This opens up new opportunities to increase sales and develop broader business connections.
2. Cost Reduction in Promotion: Digital marketing can be a more affordable alternative compared to traditional promotion methods such as print or television advertisements. By using digital platforms, farmers can leverage cost-effective online marketing tools such as social media, email marketing, or blogs to build their brand, communicate product values, and promote special offers to customers. This helps reduce promotion costs and allows more efficient budget utilization.
3. Direct Engagement with Customers: Digital marketing allows farmers to interact directly with their customers through social media, website comments, or direct messages. This allows one to listen to customer feedback, answer questions, and address concerns in real-time. This direct engagement can help build closer relationships between farmers and customers, ultimately increasing customer loyalty and influencing their purchasing decisions.
4. Increased Brand Visibility: By leveraging digital marketing, farmers can build their online presence and enhance the visibility of their brand. Farmers can share stories about their products, the values they uphold, and the sustainable farming practices they implement through websites, social media, or other online marketing platforms. This helps differentiate their brand from competitors and attract customers seeking high-quality, sustainable agricultural products.
5. Precise Targeting: Digital marketing enables farmers to target audiences that align with their products effectively. Based on these findings, they can use online analytical tools to understand consumer preferences and behaviors and optimize

their marketing strategies. By targeting customer groups most likely interested in their agricultural products, farmers can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their marketing efforts.

4th pict. The Audience

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion:

1. The socialization activities regarding digital marketing for agricultural products in Mojolaban Village ran smoothly and provided benefits to the farming community as the primary audience.
2. In general, farmers have an understanding of the concept of digital marketing. However, many still need to adopt social media to market their products to consumers.
3. The high enthusiasm of the farmers is evident through their active participation in community service activities, including efforts to market products through their personal social media accounts.
4. Farmers experience easy sourcing of raw materials or agricultural equipment through interactions with fellow traders in the Facebook community.
5. With the directly perceived benefits, farmers desire regular training in using digital applications for marketing activities, preferably held monthly.

Recommendations:

1. Organize regular meetings for training and direct assistance to farmers in optimizing the use of social media as a tool for digital marketing. These meetings are expected to enhance the understanding and skills of farmers in utilizing social media to market agricultural products.

2. In addition to training, regular evaluations should be conducted to measure the extent of farmers' understanding of digital marketing. This evaluation can involve assessments of the content created and posted and the number of sales directly attributable to digital marketing efforts. Evaluation is necessary to determine whether aspects still need to be optimally utilized and identify areas needing improvement.
3. Conducting socialization in a more enclosed space, delivering additional content on digital marketing and content creation techniques, and providing enhanced facilities, such as guidebooks on digital marketing, might foster a sense of independence and positively boosting a better quality of life for the farmers while living in a futuristic world.

REFERENCES

Bojkić, V., Vrbančić, M., Žibrin, D., & Čut, M. (2016). Digital marketing in the agricultural sector. ENTRENOVA-ENTerprise REsearch InNOVAtion, 2(1), 419-424.

Chakti, G. (2019). The Book Of Digital Marketing: Buku Pemasaran Digital (Vol. 1). Celebes Media Perkasa.

Gusti, S. R. (2022). Kontribusi Petani Milenial dalam Perkembangan Teknologi Pertanian.

Hakim, A. (2018). Pengaruh Biaya Produksi Terhadap Pendapatan Petani Mandiri Kelapa Sawit Di Kecamatan Segah. Jurnal ekonomi STIEP, 3(2), 31- 38.

Intan, T., Revia, B., & Erwita, A. (2019). Peningkatan daya saing produsen minuman herbal melalui pembuatan konten kreatif media sosial berbasis pemasaran e-marketing. Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional, 3(2).

Mahedy, K. S., Parmawati, P., & Ernanda, K. (2016). Pelatihan pemanfaatan media online sebagai sarana pemasaran hasil produksi bagi asosiasi pengrajin industri kecil (Apik) Kabupaten Buleleng. In Seminar Nasional Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (Vol. 1).

Pradiani, T. (2017). Pengaruh sistem pemasaran digital marketing terhadap peningkatan volume penjualan hasil industri rumahan. Jurnal Ilmiah Bisnis Dan Ekonomi Asia, 11(2), 46-53.

Reddy, T. S. (2021). The impact of digital marketing on agricultural business in India. NVEO-NATURAL VOLATILES & ESSENTIAL OILS Journal| NVEO, pp. 426–437.

Utami, D. P. (2020, October). Pengenalan digital marketing dalam pemasaran produk pertanian untuk petani milenial Desa Wonotulus Kecamatan Purworejo Kabupaten Purworejo. In Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pertanian (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 25-32).

Yuantari, M. C., & Kurniadi, A. (2016). Pemanfaatan Teknologi Informasi Untuk Meningkatkan Pemasaran Hasil Pertanian Di Desa Curut Kecamatan Penawangan Kabupaten Grobogan Jawa Tengah. Techno. Com, 15(1), 43–47.