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Empowering Catfish Processors through Digital Branding and TikTok-Based Social Commerce Marketing

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Abstract: Fish-processing groups in Kampung Patin, XIII Koto Kampar, Kampar Regency, Indonesia, operate in a major catfish farming and fishing center and process locally produced catfish into value-added products, including smoked catfish, nuggets, and shredded catfish. However, their marketing activities remain largely conventional, reflecting limited adoption of digital marketing and digital business management practices. This community service program aims to strengthen digital branding and TikTok marketing capabilities to expand market reach and enhance the competitiveness of catfish-processing enterprises through social commerce. The program employed a participatory approach involving needs identification, training, hands-on practice, mentoring, and evaluation. The primary partner was Graha Pratama, a micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) engaged in fish processing, together with local fish processors. Evaluation data were collected from 21 participants using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire covering implementation quality, post-activity knowledge and skills, and perceived business impact. The data were analyzed descriptively using mean scores. The mean scores were 4.17 for implementation quality, 3.88 for post-activity knowledge and skills, and 4.11 for perceived business impact, all of which fell within the high category. Participants also practiced creating promotional content and using TikTok as a business marketing channel. The findings indicate favorable participant perceptions of the program and self-reported improvements in digital marketing practices. However, the evaluation did not directly measure TikTok analytics, customer conversion rates, or sales growth. Continued mentoring is therefore recommended to improve content consistency, customer engagement, and data-driven digital marketing evaluation. This program provides a practical foundation for strengthening digital marketing capacity among local catfish-processing enterprises, although its effects on measurable business performance require further investigation.

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Introduction

The village of Kampung Patin in XIII Koto Kampar Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau, has catfish farming and processing activities that support the local economy. The value-added products produced include smoked catfish, nuggets, and shredded catfish. One of the partners, the SME Graha Pratama Fish, has ongoing production activities. Of the initial observation and interview results, the use of digital technology among partners remains meager. Quantitatively, the proportion of partners' online sales was recorded at 0%, as 100% of marketing channels still rely on direct sales, personal networks, and word-of-mouth. In

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addition, all participants (100%) stated that they do not yet have a digital storefront or an official business account on social media or e-commerce platforms, nor have they implemented digital business transaction recording, implying that all transactions are recorded manually or are not documented in a structured manner. Limitations in digital business accounts, brand identity consistency, packaging design, and content creation skills hinder the utilization of online marketing channels.

Digital marketing is not merely about moving a product catalog online, but rather about integrating customer insights, content, communication channels, and performance evaluation (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). In the context of small businesses, the use of technology also requires business owners to have the ability to manage information and transactions on an ongoing basis (OECD, 2021). Digital transformation at the SME level has been shown to have a significant impact on improving business performance in emerging markets, provided that it is accompanied by adequate internal digital capabilities and support (Dwivedi et al., 2023). On the other hand, integrating social media and social commerce platforms, such as TikTok Shop, has proven effective in driving consumer purchase intention through the building of trust and intensive visual interaction (Hajli et al., 2022; Wang & Zang, 2021). A study conducted by Wu et al. (2024) examined the relationship between digital marketing strategies and the performance of MSMEs; however, its application to local food processors still needs to be tailored to the partners' skills, products, and resources. Several previous community service programs have examined digitalization interventions for SMEs in the fisheries and food processing sectors using diverse approaches. Indraswari et al. (2024) implemented digital branding mentoring for processed fish products, with a unique focus on creating a visual product catalog and digitizing customer service via WhatsApp Business. Meanwhile, Setiawan et al. (2023) highlighted efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of fisheries food processing SMEs through strategies for designing QR Code-enabled packaging with a visual identity and optimizing marketplace platforms, distinguishing their mentoring approach through a peer-mentoring scheme involving local youth. Pratama and Rahmawati (2024), meanwhile, explore the use of social commerce for local processed SMEs, leveraging a hands-on storytelling approach in short-form video content and interactive promotional techniques. The success of these programs demonstrates that social media- and social commerce-based interventions have significant potential to drive the expansion of the market reach for fisheries SMEs.

The challenges faced by partners include not only the lack of digital sales channels but also the lack of integration among product identity, promotions, customer service, and business management. Therefore, this community service program aims to strengthen digital branding and TikTok marketing to expand market reach and enhance the competitiveness of catfish processing enterprises through social commerce.

Method

The community service program was held on August 20–22, 2026, in Kampung Patin Village, XIII Koto Kampar Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau, in partnership with the SME Graha Pratama Fish and a group of catfish processors. The program adopted a participatory approach, based on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Chambers, 1994), at placed participants as the key actors in identifying needs, implementing practices, and providing feedback. This participatory approach was selected, as the success of rural community empowerment depends heavily on shifting the community's role from merely being passive objects or recipients of aid to becoming active agents who take the lead in analyzing

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problems, formulating solutions, and evaluating actions independently (Chambers, 1994). In line with this, Minkler and Wallerstein (2008) stated that direct participatory involvement can foster a sense of ownership, boost partners' self-confidence, and ensure that adopting the offered technology aligns with local social realities and technical capacities. Furthermore, Cornwall (2008) emphasizes that meaningful participation does not stop at the expression of aspirations but is realized through co-learning and hands-on practice to ensure the sustainability of new skills. Of this principle, this community service program is not carried out through one-way (top-down) knowledge transfer, but rather through four systematic, participatory steps: (1) initial coordination and joint identification and digital marketing barriers; (2) interactive training on digital branding, brand or product identity, and social commerce; (3) guided hands-on practice in registering a TikTok Shop Seller account, creating promotional video content, and an introduction to WhatsApp Business and online marketplaces; and (4) evaluation of the activities through the completion of a feedback questionnaire.

Data are collected using a structured instrument in the form of an Evaluation and Feedback for participants in community service activities. This questionnaire was developed by adapting Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006) to measure reaction, learning, and perceived impact, combined with indicators of digital marketing capabilities and innovation adoption from Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2022); Rogers (2003). Before being used, this adapted instrument underwent an expert judgement process by internal evaluators and community empowerment experts from the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) at Universitas Riau to test its content validity and face validity, thereby ensuring it is relevant, easy to grasp, and aligned with the digital literacy characteristics of rural MSME actors. Structurally, this evaluation instrument consists of:

1) Section A (Respondent Demographics)
   This measures participant demographics, including gender, age, business ownership status, length of business operation, and type of processed fish products.
2) Section B (Quality of Activity Implementation)
   It adapts Kirkpatrick's Level 1 (Reaction) to measure satisfaction with the materials, presenters, delivery, and activity facilities through 20 indicators on a 1-5 Likert scale (1 = Very Poor to 5 = Very Good).
3) Section C (Evaluation of Knowledge and Skill Improvement)
   This adapts Kirkpatrick's Level 2 (Learning) and the digital capability framework by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2002) to measure post-activity technical proficiency through 15 indicators on a 1-5 Likert scale (1= Very Unable to 5 = Very Able)
4) Section D (Evaluation of Business Impact)
   This adapts Kirkpatrick's Level 3 and 4 (Behavior and Impact) to assess perceptions of sustainability and potential business impact through 10 indicators on a 1-5 Likert scale.
5) Section E (Digital Branding and Social Commerce Outcomes)
   It measures the adoption of specific digital innovations before and after the activity based on Rogers's (2003) framework through 10 dichotomous indicators ("Yes" / "No").

Data from Sections B, C, and D were analyzed descriptively using mean scores each indicator and aspect. To interpret the mean scores of the evaluation, qualitative criteria were

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used based on the intervals of a 5-point Likert scale with an interval class width of 0.80. The qualitative categories for the scores are as follows:

Table 1. Qualitative Categories

Scores	Categories
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.40	Medium
3.41 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very High

The data in Section E, meanwhile, were analyzed by comparing the number and percentage of participants who reported adopting digital practices before and after the intervention. This analysis focuses on participants' self-reported adoption, rather than independent technical audits of accounts or experimental tests of sales causality.

A total of 21 participants completed the evaluation using a 1–5 Likert scale. The instrument consisted of 20 indicators of program implementation quality, 15 indicators of post-activity knowledge and skills, and 10 indicators of perceived business impact. The data were analyzed descriptively using averages per indicator and per aspect. Additionally, the report noted the number of participants who stated they reported implementing the ten digital branding and social commerce practices before and after the activity. These measurements are based on participant self-reports, not account audits, objective skill tests, or evidence of a causal increase in sales.

Result and Discussion



Figure 1. Digital Marketing and Social Commerce Training

The event began with a discussion of the partners' challenges and continued with training and hands-on practice. Participants were introduced to the importance of brand identity, product photography and videography, writing promotional messages, and managing business channels. TikTok social media marketing received special attention during the hands-on session. TikTok was selected based on the results of a needs assessment of the partners, which showed that a relatively larger number of participating MSME owners used that platform. The hands-on practice involved registering a store on TikTok Shop Seller, using an existing TikTok account or creating a new one, setting a store name that aligns with the brand, verifying business information, filling out store details, and adding products. Once the store was registered, participants were guided on how to use engaging content as a tool for promotion and interaction with potential customers. Thus, TikTok was introduced not

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only as a platform for publishing content but also as part of social commerce that connects promotional activities with digital transaction opportunities.

Table 2. Results of Quality Assessment of Activity Implementation

No	Indicators	Average	Categories
1)	Relevance of the Material	4.19	High
2)	Easy-to-Use Digital Branding Materials	4.10	High
3)	Relevance of Social Commence	4.24	High
4)	Benefits of Social-Media for Business	4.29	High
5)	Benefits of Online Marketplaces	4.14	High
6)	Ease of Implementing Digital Content	4	High
7)	Benefits of Product Identity	4.05	High
8)	Knowledge of Product Packaging	4.05	High
9)	Benefits of Financial Record-Keeping	4.14	High
10)	Ease of Business Planning	3.95	Medium
11)	Mastery of Subject Matter	4.24	High
12)	Clarity of Material Presentation	4.38	High
13)	Opportunities for Discussion	4.33	High
14)	Quality of Practical Guidance	4.14	High
15)	Benefits of Learning by Doing	4.29	High
16)	Timing Suitability	4.14	High
17)	Facility Support	4.14	High
18)	Team Responsiveness	4.19	High
19)	Interactivity of Activities	4.10	High
20)	Overall Benefits	4.38	High

As displayed above, relatively high ratings for program implementation are observed in the Clarity of the Material Presentation (4.38) and the Overall Benefits of the program (4.38) as High, as well as Opportunities for Discussion (4.33) as High. The Ease of Business Planning receives a rating of 3.95 as Medium, and the Ease of Implementing with Digital Content indicates a rating of 4.00 as High. These differences indicate the need to increase the amount of hands-on practice time for more technical material.

Table 3. Summary of the Three Main Aspects of the Assessment Results Reported by 21 Participants

Aspects	Number of Indicators	Average (1–5)
Quality of Activity Implementation	20	4.17
Post-Activity Knowledge and Skills	15	3.88
Perceived Impact on Business	10	4.11

Of the three main aspects of the assessment results, based on 21 participants, the average reveals that the three aspects, Quality of Activity Implementation (4.17), Post-Activity Knowledge and Skills (3.88), and Perceived Impact on Business (4.11), indicate high category.

Table 4. Selected Indicators from the Post-Activity Competency Assessment and Perceptions of Business Impact

Aspects	Indicators	Average
Post-Activity Competencies	Digital marketing concepts	4,00
Post-Activity Competencies	Digital Customer Service	3,62
Post-Activity Competencies	Promotional Videos	3,76

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Post-Activity Competencies	Use of Marketplaces	3,76
Perception of Business Impact	Marketing Competencies	4,43
Perception of Business Impact	Professionalism in Management	3,90

In addition, the report includes data on the number of participants who reported certain practices before and after the training.

Table 5. Selected Indicators Based on 21 Respondents

Reported Practices	Before (People)	After (People)
Have a business social media account	2	20
Use WhatsApp Business	5	19
Have a marketplace account	3	21
Actively create promotional content	6	19
Receive digital orders	3	20
Conduct regular promotions	6	20

Discussion

The average rating for implementation quality was 4.17, and the average rating for perceived impact was 4.11, indicating that participants rated the materials, facilitation, and mentoring very positively (Table 1). These findings align with community empowerment studies by Nasution et al. (2022) and Sun and Pasaribu (2024), which demonstrate that community-based hands-on mentoring effectively increases awareness and interest in digital adoption among rural SMEs. The uniqueness of the program in Kampung Patin lies in the direct integration of visual brand identity design for catfish-based downstream products with registration for the TikTok Shop Seller digital store, allowing participants to link promotional content exposure to direct transaction channels.

However, there is a gap between the average implementation quality score (4.17) and the average post-activity competency mastery score (3.88). The difference between the average implementation score and the post-activity competency score highlights the importance of distinguishing between program acceptance and skill mastery. This gap can be explained through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework by Davis (1989). A high implementation score reflects high Perceived Usefulness, where participants recognize the importance of social commerce for the growth of their businesses. Conversely, lower competency scores indicate obstacles in Perceived Ease of Use due to the digital literacy gap commonly found among rural SMEs (OECD, 2021; Rahayu & Day, 2015). As noted by Sun and Pasaribu (2024), the transition from conceptual understanding to technical execution requires navigating the application interface, which entails a longer learning curve.

This consistency gap became even more apparent when comparing the indicator for understanding digital marketing concepts (4.00) with those for creating promotional videos (3.76) and providing digital customer service (3.62) (Table 2). Conceptual understanding was based on declarative cognitive learning “knows what”, which is relatively easy to absorb through interactive lectures. In contrast, creating promotional videos requires technical-procedural and psychomotor skills “knows how”, including lighting setup, camera angles, video editing, and copywriting. On the other hand, digital customer received the lowest score (3.62), as it required behavioral adaptation from conventional face-to-face communication to responsive and rapid written communication via instant messaging apps. Managing prospective buyers’ questions online in between daily production activities posed a unique time-management challenge for fish processors.

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The indicators for digital customer service, promotional video production, and marketplace usage scored lower than the understanding of digital marketing concepts. This is particularly important in the context of marketing via TikTok, as the platform's effectiveness heavily depends on business owners' ability to produce visual content, craft promotional messages, respond to consumer interactions, and consistently manage transaction channels. The score of 3.76 for promotional video skills indicates that content production still requires improvement. For catfish-processing SMEs, TikTok content can be tailored to showcase product characteristics, processing methods, packaging, serving suggestions, and brand identity in a more engaging manner. Therefore, guidance should not stop at simply creating an account or store but must extend to developing the ability to design relevant content and maintain consistent marketing activities.

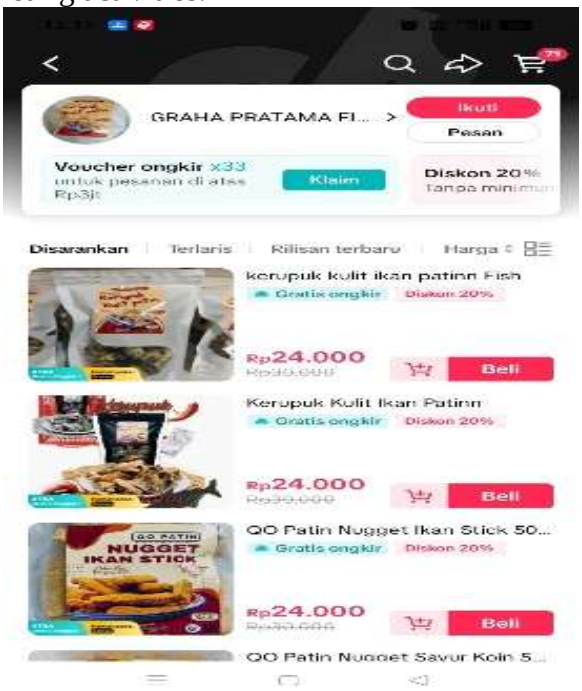


Figure 2. Active Sales Accounts on TikTok Shop

The use of TikTok in this initiative demonstrates the integration of digital branding and social commerce at the practical level. The brand identity that is built must be consistently reflected in the store name, product displays, photos or videos, and promotional messages. At the same time, the TikTok Shop feature provides a platform for MSME operators to link content exposure to the sales process. In the context of empowerment, this approach is relevant because participants learn through hands-on practice (learning by doing), from store registration to product listing. However, the activity report does not yet provide TikTok analytics such as the number of views, reach, engagement rate, conversion rate, or transaction value. Therefore, the results of this community service initiative should be interpreted as an initial capacity-building effort and the opening of a digital marketing channel, rather than as evidence of increased sales directly attributable to TikTok.

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Figure 3. Practice and Mentoring Activities

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the use of TikTok marketplace in this program demonstrates the integration of digital branding and social commerce at the operational level. The brand identity that was built is reflected in the store name, product displays, and posted content, while the TikTok Shop feature provides a direct channel linking content interactions to the purchasing process. The link between visual content exposure and the ease of digital transactions is crucial in building consumer trust, which is the primary driver of purchase intent on social media platforms (Hajli et al., 2022; Wang & Zang, 2021). The Learning-by-Doing approach is proven effective in guiding participants from account registration through product catalog entry.



Figure 4. Documentation of Questionnaire Completion

The increase in the number of participants adopting digital marketing—such as the number of participants with business social media accounts rising from 2 to 20 and those with marketplace accounts rising from 3 to 21—indicates the success of the early stages of innovation diffusion. As displayed in Figure 4, participants move from the initial awareness stage toward the implementation of practices. However, as this data is based on self-reported information, continuous mentoring is essential to monitor the sustainability of account activity, the quality of customer service, and the actual impact on sales revenue.

The increase in the number of participants reporting account ownership and promotional activities indicates a perceived change in practices during the evaluation period. However, this data is self-reported and has not been accompanied by an assessment of account activity sustainability, consumer reach, transaction value, or changes in revenue. Therefore, conclusions about the program are limited to initial capacity building and

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perceptions of benefits, rather than measurable commercial effectiveness. Follow-up efforts should periodically track the frequency of posts, customer responses, the number of orders, and sales, accompanied by digital evidence.

Limitations of the activities include the short duration of the training, variations in initial digital literacy among participants, and a perception-based evaluation without a control group. The goals of collective brand development and business account verification should be distinguished from the achievements already demonstrated in the progress report. Future mentoring programs are recommended to focus on regular content creation workshops, managing digital customer service workflows, and periodic analytical evaluations of accounts.

Conclusion

The empowerment program for catfish processors in Kampung Patin provided training and hands-on experience in digital branding, TikTok social media marketing, and social commerce, which was positively received by the 21 participants. The evaluation showed an average score of 4.17 for program implementation, 3.88 for post-activity skills, and 4.11 for perceived business impact. Hands-on practice with TikTok Shop helped participants understand the steps involved in launching a digital marketing channel, from store registration and setting up the store's identity to verification and product listing. These results indicate that TikTok can be leveraged as both a promotional platform and a social commerce channel for catfish value-added products. However, its effectiveness in terms of market reach and sales needs to be demonstrated through monitoring of account activity, content analytics, and transaction data over a longer period.

Recommendation

To ensure the sustainability and optimization of the impact of empowerment programs, the following follow-up recommendation are directed at three key stakeholders to:

1) Partners (Graha Pratama Fish MSMEs and Fish Processing Groups)
   - Consistency in Digital Activities: Maintaining a scheduled routine for posting promotional content on TikTok and the business's social media accounts to sustain reach and engagement with potential customers.
   - Customers Service Management: Implementing quick-response standards when handling inquiries and orders received through digital channels and the TikTok Shop messaging feature.
   - Structured Transaction Recording: Starting routinely to document every online order and sale to make it easier to evaluate the business progress.
2) Local Governments and Relevant Agencies (Kampar Fisheries Office and Kampar Cooperatives/SMEs Office)
   - Facility and Infrastructure Support: Providing support facilities for digital marketers in the Kampung Patin center, such as setting up a shared photo/video booth area and improving internet access.
   - Integration of Regional Capacity-Building Programs: Integrating fish-processing groups into business legality certification programs (P-IRT, Halal), packaging training, and promotional activities at regional and national trade fairs.
   - Collective Brand Development: Promoting the legal recognition and strengthening of the collective brand identity for regional catfish products to enhance the competitiveness of downstream fisheries products in e-commerce channels.

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3) Next Community Service Team
   - Ongoing Technical Training: Designing coaching clinic-based interventions focused on improving highly technical skills, particularly in promotional video editing and promotional copywriting.
   - Analytics-Based Impact Measurement: Measuring the effectiveness of digital marketing using quantitative analytics metrics (backend analytics), such as video views, engagement rate, click-through rate, transaction conversions, and periodic revenue growth.
   - Long-Term Evaluation Methodology: Implementing a periodic monitoring design (longitudinal evaluation) and consider the use of a control group to more objectively demonstrate the causal impact of digital interventions.

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