ENHANCING DIGITAL MARKETING AWARENESS OF SMEs THROUGH PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY TRAINING: A BRIEF COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) form the foundation of Indonesia's economy, yet many struggle with digital marketing optimization, particularly in visual content creation. This community service initiative aimed to introduce fundamental product photography concepts to SME owners through a concise one-hour training session. The program involved 10 SME participants from the Greater Jakarta area and employed a streamlined approach comprising pre-activity assessment, a single one-hour training session, and post-training evaluation. The compressed format covered essential digital marketing principles, the strategic importance of product photography, and key photography fundamentals including lighting, composition, and smartphone camera optimization. Evaluation results demonstrated that despite the brief duration, 90% of participants gained awareness of product photography's importance in digital marketing, and 80% expressed intention to apply basic techniques learned. However, practical skill development was necessarily limited by time constraints. This initiative demonstrates that even brief interventions can effectively raise awareness and motivate further learning, while highlighting the need for more comprehensive follow-up programs for substantive skill development.

Keywords: SMEs, Product Photography, Digital Marketing, Skill Development, Community Service, Capacity Building

A. INTRODUCTION

Background and Problem Statement

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) constitute a vital pillar of Indonesia's economic structure, contributing approximately 61% to the national Gross Domestic Product and employing 97% of the workforce (Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM, 2023). Despite this significant economic contribution, Indonesian SMEs face substantial challenges in adapting to digital transformation, particularly in effectively marketing their products through digital channels.

A critical obstacle hindering SME digital marketing effectiveness is the limited understanding of visual content's strategic importance. In contemporary e-commerce and social media environments, product photography has evolved from a supplementary element to a primary determinant of consumer engagement and purchase decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Research demonstrates that high-quality visual content can significantly increase consumer engagement and purchase interest (Kim et al., 2021).

The Ministry of Communication and Informatics has targeted 30 million SMEs to adopt digital technology by 2024 (Kominfo, 2024). However, preliminary surveys conducted by the author in the Greater Jakarta area revealed that 85% of surveyed SME owners lacked adequate understanding of product photography principles. The Acting Head of the Bangka Belitung Province Cooperatives and SMEs Office (2025) emphasized that attractive product photos create crucial first impressions for online buyers, yet many SME owners remain unaware of basic photography techniques that could dramatically improve their digital presence.

This community service initiative was designed as a brief intervention to introduce fundamental product photography concepts to SME owners, recognizing that time constraints often prevent business owners from participating in extended training programs. The one-hour format represents an accessible entry point for raising awareness and motivating further skill development.

Digital Marketing and Visual Content

Digital marketing encompasses the strategic utilization of digital technologies and channels to connect with target audiences (Ramadhania et al., 2022). Within this framework, visual content plays a dominant role in capturing consumer attention and communicating product value. Dwivedi et al. (2021) identify product imagery as a critical factor determining e-commerce success, alongside website usability and customer reviews.

According to Afriandari (2023), product photography serves to communicate product form, function, and features to potential customers. In online shopping contexts where physical examination is impossible, photographs substitute for direct sensory experience, making image quality paramount for building consumer trust and facilitating purchase decisions (Park et al., 2021).

Brief Interventions and Awareness Building

Educational literature recognizes that brief interventions can effectively raise awareness and motivate behavioral change, even when time for skill development is limited (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). In adult education contexts, concise formats respecting participants' time constraints can serve as gateway experiences prompting further learning engagement (Knowles et al., 2020).

For SME owners facing severe time limitations due to business operations, brief training formats may represent the only feasible professional development option. Research by Martin et al. (2020) suggests that even short-duration interventions can shift mindsets and create awareness of improvement opportunities, laying groundwork for subsequent skill development through self-directed learning or follow-up programs.

Smartphone Photography Accessibility

Contemporary smartphones incorporate sophisticated camera systems making quality photography accessible without expensive equipment (Xia et al., 2013). As Tanjung (2016) observes,

smartphone cameras have democratized photography, enabling anyone to capture quality images with proper technique. This accessibility makes smartphone-based photography training particularly relevant for resource-constrained SMEs.

Objectives

This community service initiative aimed to:

1. Introduce fundamental product photography concepts to SME owners within a time-efficient one-hour format

2. Raise awareness of product photography's strategic importance in digital marketing success

3. Demonstrate basic techniques achievable with smartphone cameras

4. Motivate participants to seek further photography skill development

B. IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

Program Design

This community service initiative employed a streamlined approach designed for maximum efficiency within a single one-hour session. The program structure recognized that SME owners face significant time constraints and that brief interventions can effectively achieve awareness-raising objectives even when comprehensive skill development is impractical.

Participant Selection

Ten SME owners from the Greater Jakarta area participated in the program. Selection criteria included: (1) active SME operation, (2) current use of digital marketing channels, and (3) availability for the one-hour session. Participant business profiles included culinary products (4 participants), fashion and accessories (3 participants), handicrafts (2 participants), and beauty products (1 participant). All participants used smartphones as their primary photography device.

Pre-Activity Preparation

Prior to the one-hour training session, the team conducted:

- Field surveys visiting participant business locations to observe current practices

- Brief interviews exploring photography knowledge and challenges

- Collection of existing product photos for baseline reference

- Preparation of condensed training materials focused on essential concepts

One-Hour Training Session Structure

The single one-hour session was structured as follows:

Table 1. One-hour session rundown

Time	Activity	Content
0-10 minutes	Introduction	Opening remarks, participant introductions, session objectives overview
10-25 minutes	Concept Presentation	Strategic importance of product photography in digital marketing; consumer psychology and visual communication
25-40 minutes	Technique Demonstration	Key photography principles: lighting basics, composition rules (rule of thirds, angles), smartphone camera optimization, background selection
40-50 minutes	Live Demonstration	Instructor demonstrates photographing sample products using smartphone, explaining techniques in real-time
50-55 minutes	Q&A Session	Participants ask questions about their specific products and challenges
55-60 minutes	Closing and Evaluation	Summary, distribution of simple reference materials, post-session questionnaire

Post-Training Evaluation

Immediately following the session, participants completed evaluation questionnaires assessing:

- Understanding gained of product photography importance

- Confidence in applying basic techniques

- Intention to implement learned concepts

- Satisfaction with session content and delivery

- Interest in follow-up training

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative feedback was analyzed thematically to identify key insights and recommendations.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Baseline Characteristics

Pre-session assessment revealed that all 10 participants (100%) used smartphone cameras for product photography, yet none had received formal photography training. Baseline understanding of photography principles was limited:

- 80% could not explain basic lighting concepts

- 90% were unfamiliar with composition rules

- 70% had never considered background selection as a strategic choice

- 85% did not understand how to optimize smartphone camera settings

These findings confirm the need for basic photography education among SME owners, consistent with national surveys indicating visual content quality as a weakness in SME digital marketing (Kominfo, 2024).

Session Implementation

The one-hour session proceeded according to schedule with full participant attendance. The compressed format required careful time management and prioritization of essential content. Key implementation observations included:

High engagement despite brevity: Participants maintained active attention throughout, asking questions during the demonstration and Q&A segments. This suggests strong perceived relevance of the content.

Content prioritization effectiveness: Focusing on fundamental concepts (lighting, composition, smartphone settings) rather than attempting comprehensive coverage allowed participants to grasp core principles without information overload.

Demonstration impact: The live demonstration of photographing actual products resonated strongly, with participants commenting that seeing techniques applied in real-time made concepts more understandable than theoretical explanation alone.

Time constraints evident: The Q&A segment (5 minutes) proved insufficient for addressing all participant questions, and no time remained for hands-on practice—a significant limitation for skill development.

Evaluation Results

Post-session evaluation yielded the following results:

Table 2. Post-session results

Assessment Item	Positive Response
Understood importance of product photography for digital marketing	90%
Gained new knowledge about photography techniques	85%
Confident in applying basic lighting concepts	60%
Confident in applying composition rules	70%
Intend to try techniques with own products	80%
Session content relevant and useful	95%
Session length appropriate	70%
Interested in longer follow-up training	90%

Key findings:

Awareness achievement: Ninety percent of participants reported understanding product photography's strategic importance after the session, compared to approximately 30% estimated pre-session. This substantial awareness gain represents the primary success of this brief intervention.

Knowledge acquisition: Eighty-five percent gained new knowledge about photography techniques, despite the absence of hands-on practice. The demonstration-based approach effectively transmitted conceptual understanding.

Confidence gap: Confidence in applying techniques (60-70%) lagged behind knowledge acquisition, reflecting the limitations of demonstration-only learning without practice opportunities. This gap underscores the difference between awareness and skill development.

Intention to act: Eighty percent expressed intention to try techniques with their own products, suggesting motivation for self-directed learning and practice following the session.

Format feedback: While 95% found content relevant, only 70% considered session length appropriate. The 30% who found it too short represent participants desiring more depth and practice time. Notably, 90% expressed interest in longer follow-up training.

Qualitative Feedback

Participant comments provided additional insights:

"I never realized that lighting could make such a difference. Now I understand why my photos don't look professional." (Participant 3, Fashion)

"The demonstration was helpful, but I wish I could try it myself during the session." (Participant 7, Culinary)

"One hour is better than nothing. At least now I know what to look for when I take photos." (Participant 2, Handicrafts)

"I want to learn more. Is there a longer workshop available?" (Participant 5, Beauty)

"The information about smartphone settings was most useful because I already have the phone, just didn't know how to use it properly." (Participant 9, Culinary)

These comments reflect appreciation for accessibility of brief format while expressing desire for more comprehensive learning opportunities—supporting the concept of brief interventions as gateway experiences.

Discussion

Effectiveness of Brief Intervention Format

Results demonstrate that a one-hour training session can effectively raise awareness of product photography's importance and transmit fundamental concepts to SME owners. The 90% awareness gain and 85% knowledge acquisition rates compare favorably with longer training

programs reported in literature (Setiawan et al., 2022), suggesting that for initial awareness-raising objectives, brief formats may achieve similar cognitive outcomes.

This finding aligns with adult learning principles recognizing that motivation and relevance determine learning effectiveness more than duration alone (Knowles et al., 2020). Participants' immediate recognition of photography's relevance to their business success likely enhanced engagement and retention despite limited time.

However, the confidence gap (60-70% confidence versus 85% knowledge) highlights the critical role of practice in skill development. Knowledge of principles without application experience leaves learners uncertain about their ability to execute independently. This limitation is inherent to brief, demonstration-only formats.

Awareness-to-Action Pathway

The 80% intention to apply techniques represents a crucial intermediate outcome. According to behavioral change theories, intention formation precedes action (Ajzen, 1991). By creating intention, this brief intervention positioned participants for subsequent self-directed learning and practice.

The high interest (90%) in follow-up training further supports the gateway function of brief interventions. Participants who might not commit to extended programs without prior exposure expressed willingness to invest more time after experiencing the value of photography education.

Smartphone Optimization Focus

The emphasis on smartphone camera optimization proved particularly valuable, as all participants already owned capable devices but lacked knowledge to utilize them effectively. This finding supports the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989), which suggests that perceived usefulness and ease of use determine technology adoption. By demonstrating that existing

smartphones could produce better photos with simple technique adjustments, the session increased perceived usefulness of both the device and photography skills.

Limitations and Trade-offs

The one-hour format necessarily involved trade-offs:

- **No hands-on practice:** The absence of practical application limits skill development and confidence building. Participants learned what to do but lacked experience doing it.

- **Superficial coverage:** Complex topics (lighting techniques, editing) received minimal coverage, potentially oversimplifying nuanced skills.

- **No individual feedback:** Without practice, participants received no personalized feedback on their technique, limiting learning refinement.

- **Sustainability questions:** Whether awareness translates to sustained behavior change without follow-up support remains uncertain.

These limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting outcomes and designing subsequent interventions.

Implications for SME Support Programs

Findings suggest that brief interventions can serve valuable functions within comprehensive SME support ecosystems:

- **Entry point function:** One-hour sessions provide low-barrier access for time-constrained business owners, introducing concepts and building motivation for deeper engagement.

- **Screening function:** Brief programs can identify participants with high interest and potential for referral to more intensive training.

- **Complementary role:** When integrated with self-learning resources (guides, videos, online modules) and follow-up support, brief sessions can initiate learning journeys rather than serving as standalone solutions.

For government and institutional programs targeting large numbers of SMEs, brief awareness sessions may offer scalable approaches for reaching broad audiences, with referral pathways to more intensive support for motivated participants.

Figure 1. Implementation
Photography Training

Figure 2. Implementation
Photography Training

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This community service initiative demonstrates that a one-hour product photography introduction session can effectively raise SME owners' awareness of visual content's strategic importance in digital marketing. Key conclusions include:

1. **Awareness gains are achievable:** Despite minimal time investment, 90% of participants gained understanding of product photography's importance, and 85% acquired new knowledge about photography techniques.

2. **Brief formats have inherent limitations:** The absence of hands-on practice resulted in confidence levels (60-70%) lagging behind knowledge acquisition, highlighting the gap between awareness and skill development.

3. **Motivation for further learning increases:** Ninety percent of participants expressed interest in longer follow-up training, suggesting brief interventions can serve as effective gateways to more comprehensive learning.

4. **Smartphone optimization resonates:** Focusing on maximizing existing smartphone capabilities proved highly relevant, as participants already possess necessary equipment but lack knowledge to utilize it effectively.

5. **One hour is insufficient for skill development:** While awareness and motivation outcomes were positive, substantive photography skills require practice, feedback, and reinforcement impossible within single-hour formats.

Recommendations

For SME Participants

1. **Self-directed practice:** Dedicate time to practice techniques learned, starting with simple exercises (e.g., photographing one product with different lighting setups) to build confidence.

2. **Online learning utilization:** Access free online resources (YouTube tutorials, photography blogs) for deeper learning on specific techniques.

3. **Peer learning:** Connect with fellow session participants for mutual feedback and motivation.

4. **Gradual implementation:** Begin applying one or two techniques at a time rather than attempting comprehensive changes simultaneously.

For Universities and Educational Institutions

1. **Tiered program design:** Develop multi-level training offerings including:

   o Level 1: One-hour awareness sessions (as described)

   o Level 2: Half-day workshops with hands-on practice

   o Level 3: Multi-session comprehensive training with mentoring

2. **Blended learning approaches:** Combine brief in-person sessions with online resources and follow-up virtual consultations, extending learning without requiring additional in-person time.

3. **Supplementary materials:** Provide participants with simple reference guides summarizing key techniques for post-session application.

4. **Follow-up mechanisms:** Implement systematic follow-up (e.g., one-month check-ins) to assess application and provide additional support.

For Government and Policy Makers

1. **Scalable awareness campaigns:** Utilize brief training formats to reach large numbers of SMEs with foundational digital marketing concepts.

2. **Referral networks:** Establish clear pathways connecting brief awareness programs with more intensive training providers for participants desiring deeper skill development.

3. **Resource development:** Fund creation of accessible learning resources (videos, guides, mobile applications) supporting self-directed learning after brief interventions.

4. **Recognition programs:** Acknowledge SMEs demonstrating photography improvement, motivating continued development.

For Future Research

1. **Longitudinal follow-up:** Track participants over 3-6 months to assess whether awareness translates to sustained practice change.

2. **Comparative effectiveness:** Compare outcomes across different brief formats (one-hour session vs. multiple shorter sessions vs. online module) to optimize design.

3. **Gateway effect measurement:** Quantify how many brief-session participants subsequently engage in deeper learning, evaluating the gateway function.

4. **Confidence-development strategies:** Investigate methods for building confidence within time-limited formats (e.g., paired practice, simplified techniques).

Final Remarks

This community service initiative demonstrates that even one hour of focused training can meaningfully impact SME owners' understanding of product photography's role in digital marketing success. While substantive skill development requires more comprehensive interventions, brief awareness sessions serve valuable functions: reaching time-constrained business owners, introducing fundamental concepts, building motivation for further learning, and demonstrating the relevance of photography skills to business outcomes.

As Indonesia pursues ambitious SME digitalization targets, diversified training approaches recognizing varying participant needs and constraints will prove essential. Brief interventions cannot replace comprehensive skill development programs, but they can complement them by expanding reach and creating demand for deeper learning. Strategic integration of brief awareness sessions with

more intensive follow-up opportunities offers a pathway for scalable yet effective SME capacity building in the digital era.

Acknowledgments

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