



STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF HEALTHY RICE MSMES THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING AS A MODERN MARKETING STRATEGY

Dede Solihin^{1*}, Imam Sofi'i², Fauziah Septiani³, Widia Astuti⁴, Muhammad Gandung⁵, Hari Muharam⁶, Agus Setyo Pranowo⁷, Doni Wihartika⁸, Nancy Yusnita⁹

^{1,2,3,4,5} Pamulang University, Indonesia

^{6,7,8,9} Pakuan University, Indonesia

Corresponden Email: dosen02447@unpam.ac.id¹

Abstract

Strengthening the capacity of healthy rice Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the growing market demand for healthy and quality products are essential. However, many healthy rice MSMEs still need help marketing their products effectively, especially in the digital era. One solution to increase competitiveness and expand the market is implementing digital marketing. This study analyzes how digital marketing can be an effective marketing strategy for healthy rice MSMEs to increase their business capacity. The method used in this study is a qualitative approach with case studies on several healthy rice MSMEs that have started implementing digital marketing. Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews with MSME owners and observation and analysis of the digital marketing content used. The study results show that using digital marketing, such as social media, marketing through websites, and e-commerce platforms, can increase product visibility, expand the market, and strengthen relationships with consumers. In addition, implementing the right digital marketing strategy can improve sales and competitiveness of healthy rice MSMEs in the modern market. This study suggests that healthy rice MSMEs should optimize digital marketing as part of their marketing strategy.

Keywords: Strengthening the Capacity of MSMEs, Healthy Rice MSMEs, Digital Marketing, Modern Marketing Strategy, E-commerce, Social Media, Sales Increase, Competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, the internet is vital in designing marketing strategies for selling products. Product marketing is done by comparing existing products with a more attractive appearance. One of the problems faced by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) today is the need for more understanding and ability in branding to market their products to consumers. Most MSME entrepreneurs are still focused on business and often need to pay more attention to branding (Rifianita et al., 2022). MSME branding is an effort to create a positive perception or view from consumers towards the products or businesses being run, both in terms of trademarks, products produced, the company that manages them, and the product tagline that is its hallmark (Natalia et al., 2022). Creating the most attractive MSME product branding possible can attract attention and arouse the desire of the wider community to buy these MSME products (Ilmiah & Haryana, 2022). Digital marketing itself is the primary key to determining the success of a business. By implementing it, MSMEs can track customer behavior in real-time and find out the reach, engagement, and conversion of new products launched via the internet. It allows MSMEs to understand customer needs

appropriately. To implement digital marketing successfully, MSMEs must first understand the concept of digital marketing. They are starting with providing training and socialization about digital marketing. This training can help MSMEs understand the importance of marketing, increase the strength of their MSMEs, and maintain competitiveness (Ranjani et al., 2024).

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are an essential sector in the Indonesian economy, contributing significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), job creation, and economic equality throughout Indonesia. As one type of MSME proliferates, the healthy rice sector is getting more attention because consumers are increasingly aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and nutritious food consumption. Healthy rice, such as organic rice and low-glycemic rice, is now a trend among people who care about health (Wicaksono et al., 2021).

However, although healthy rice has a rapidly growing market, many MSMEs in this sector need help developing their businesses. The main problems often encountered are limited market access, knowledge of modern marketing, and low utilization of information technology and digital marketing to expand market reach. Most healthy rice MSMEs still rely on traditional marketing methods, which have proven less effective in facing an increasingly competitive market and rapid digitalization. Most healthy rice MSMEs in Subang Regency do not yet have adequate knowledge about effective ways to utilize digital marketing. They often only rely on social media as a means of promotion without maximizing existing features, such as paid advertising, structured content management, and analytics to evaluate marketing performance. Lack of understanding of social media algorithms and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) techniques makes their digital marketing efforts less than optimal (Yuwono & Naimah, 2024).

Several healthy rice MSMEs in Subang Regency have started selling their products on e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Bukalapak, and Shopee. However, not all MSMEs can manage online stores professionally. Many business actors still need to learn how to optimize their store profiles, set competitive prices, or utilize these platforms' promotional and advertising features. In addition, the limited human resources trained to manage e-commerce are an obstacle for some MSMEs.

The healthy rice market, especially on digital platforms, is very competitive. Many similar products offer almost the same quality and price. With clear differentiation and the right marketing strategy, healthy rice products from MSMEs in Subang Regency find it easier to stand out in the digital market. Competition with big brands with larger marketing budgets and more complete infrastructure worsens this condition. It makes it difficult for MSMEs to maintain customer loyalty and expand their market.

Building brand awareness in the digital market requires a more mature strategy. Many MSMEs in Subang Regency still need to understand the importance of consistent brand identity, especially regarding visual appearance (logo design, packaging, and promotional media), tone of voice, and

image management on social media. With a systematic effort to create a strong relationship with consumers, it is easier for this healthy rice product to build a trusted brand image in the digital market.

Many healthy rice MSMEs in Subang Regency are only managed by their owners or a few workers who need more retail marketing knowledge and skills. Effective digital marketing requires special skills, such as writing interesting content, creating high-converting ads, and analyzing data to optimize marketing strategies. The limited human resources skilled in this field are an obstacle to maximizing the potential of digital marketing.

Although Subang Regency continues to develop, the digital infrastructure in this area still needs to be improved. Unstable internet connections and limited access to digital technology in some areas hinder the online marketing process, especially for MSMEs located in rural areas or outside the city center. It makes it difficult for some MSMEs to keep up with the optimal development of digital marketing technology.

Although digital marketing is cheaper than traditional marketing, it still requires a sufficient budget to run ads, create engaging content, or promote products through influencers or bloggers. Many MSMEs in Subang Regency have limited budgets, making it difficult for them to allocate funds for effective digital marketing. As a result, they often rely on organic (free) marketing, which does not always provide optimal results in a short time.

Although healthy rice is a growing trend, many consumers are still hesitant to buy food products online, especially rice, due to product quality and safety issues. In Subang Regency, many consumers prefer to purchase products directly at markets or physical stores rather than through digital platforms. Distrust of the quality of products sold online and the inability to see or check the product directly are significant obstacles for healthy rice MSMEs in expanding their market through digital channels.

Many healthy rice MSMEs in Subang Regency have started using social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, to market their products. However, they still need to optimize the use of social media entirely. Many only rely on product posts without a clear content strategy. It is not uncommon for the content posted to lack visual appeal or not compellingly engage the audience. It results in low consumer engagement and makes building a loyal online community difficult.

Healthy food consumption trends are dynamic, with consumer preferences often changing. Healthy rice MSMEs in Subang may need help adapting to these rapid changes in terms of the types of products in demand and effective marketing methods. In digital marketing, social media trends and consumer preferences can change very quickly, and without proper monitoring, MSMEs can lose market opportunities (Wulandari et al., 2024)

Digital marketing, which involves using digital platforms such as social media, websites, and e-commerce, is one solution that can strengthen the capacity of MSMEs to develop in the modern market (Mustopa et al., 2024). Digital marketing offers excellent advantages in terms of cost

efficiency and reaching a broader market (Faerrosa et al., 2023). However, the biggest challenge is the need for more digital knowledge and skills many MSME actors possess, especially in areas such as the Subang Regency.

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the phenomena that occur in healthy rice MSMEs in PLUT KUMKM Subang Regency. This research was conducted at PLUT KUMKM Subang Regency, a gathering place for various MSME actors, especially those in the healthy food sector. This location was chosen because it represents healthy rice MSMEs in the region and has great potential in implementing digital marketing. Data were collected through various methods, namely:

1. In-depth Interviews: Interviews were conducted with healthy rice MSME owners, PLUT KUMKM managers, and several consumers of healthy rice products. The interviews aimed to understand the implementation of digital marketing, the challenges faced, and its impact on their businesses.
2. Observation: Researchers observed digital marketing activities carried out by MSMEs, including the use of social media, websites, and e-commerce.
3. Documentation: Collecting secondary data in documents or digital marketing materials used by MSMEs, such as social media advertisements and promotions on e-commerce platforms.

Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis begins by identifying the main themes that emerge from the data and then classifying the information into relevant categories to answer the research questions.

RESULTS

Healthy rice MSME members of the PLUT KUMKM Subang Regency are primarily small businesses with limited production scale. They produce various types of nutritious rice, such as organic rice, black rice, and low-glycemic rice, which are in high demand by consumers who care about health. Most of these MSMEs must thoroughly utilize digital technology to market their products.

Several obstacles for healthy rice MSMEs in Subang in adopting digital marketing are limited knowledge of digital technology, lack of skills in managing digital platforms, and difficulty building online consumer trust.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, most healthy rice MSMEs in PLUT KUMKM Subang have begun to adopt digital marketing through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. They use social media to introduce products, interact directly with consumers, and promote the health benefits of the healthy rice they sell. However, many still need to utilize the full potential of social media, such as paid advertising and structured content management.

In addition, several MSMEs have begun to explore e-commerce, although not optimally. Platforms such as Tokopedia, Bukalapak, and Shopee are the choices for selling their products online. However, the lack of skills in optimizing online stores and data-based marketing means their sales could be more optimal.

The implementation of digital marketing significantly impacts the capacity of healthy rice MSMEs. One positive impact is the increase in product visibility. Healthy rice products previously only known locally can now reach a broader market regionally and nationally. Marketing through social media also allows MSMEs to connect more with consumers, provide more detailed information about products, and build a loyal customer community.



Figure 1 Results of Community Service Activities

In addition, digital marketing also helps MSMEs increase the efficiency of marketing costs. Compared to traditional marketing, which requires high costs (for example, for print advertising or renting space in the market), marketing through social media and other digital platforms is more affordable and accessible to MSMEs with limited capital.

However, this positive impact comes with challenges. Many healthy rice MSMEs still need help managing digital content effectively. They only post product images without considering a more holistic marketing strategy, such as targeting the right audience, using paid advertising, or managing analytics to understand consumer behavior.

Based on the research results, some challenges faced by Healthy Rice UMKM in Subang in implementing digital marketing include Limited Technological Knowledge: Many MSMEs still need to understand how to optimize digital platforms. Limited Resources: Limited human resources and

budget make it difficult to manage digital marketing professionally. Tight Competition: The increasingly crowded digital market makes competition even tighter, and many MSMEs need help differentiating themselves from competitors. For this reason, training and assistance regarding effective digital marketing are necessary for healthy rice MSMEs. In addition, providing access to MSMEs to obtain tools and resources that support digital marketing is critical.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that digital marketing can play an essential role in strengthening the capacity of healthy rice MSMEs, especially in the Subang Regency. With proper implementation, digital marketing can increase product visibility, expand the market, and increase consumer interaction. However, there are still challenges in terms of digital knowledge and skills that need to be addressed through training and mentoring. With the proper support, healthy rice MSMEs in Subang Regency can be more competitive and highly competitive in the modern market.

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