

Strengthening Digital Marketing of Ajakkang Local Products through the LESTARI System to Support Community Empowerment

Penguatan Pemasaran Digital Produk Lokal Ajakkang Berbasis Sistem LESTARI untuk Mendukung Pemberdayaan Masyarakat

Nurwati Djam'an^{a*}, Suradi^a, A. Ihsan^a, Heri Tahir^a, & Fitriwati^b

^aUniversitas Negeri Makassar, Jl. A. P. Pettarani, Gunungsari, Kec. Rappocini, Makassar, 90222. Indonesia

^bUniversitas Hasanuddin, Tamalanrea, Makassar, 90245. Indonesia

Abstract

This community service program aims to strengthen the digital marketing of local products through the implementation of the LESTARI System as a community-based digital marketing platform. The program was conducted during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 Academic Year through a collaborative initiative involving lecturers and students from Universitas Negeri Makassar and Universitas Hasanuddin. The program was implemented in Ajakkang Village, Soppeng Riaja District, Barru Regency, involving the Fish Processing Group (POKLAHSAR) Berkah, local MSME actors, and the village government. The implementation method employed a *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach through stages of problem identification, needs analysis, system development, community training and mentoring, system implementation, and program evaluation. The results demonstrated an improvement in community capacity in digital marketing, business management, product branding, and the utilization of social media and marketplaces as promotional media. The implementation of the LESTARI System also encouraged increased community participation, the emergence of local leaders, and greater public awareness regarding the importance of digital transformation and mangrove environmental conservation as part of sustainable economic development. Therefore, the LESTARI System has proven effective as a medium for strengthening the digital marketing of local products while supporting technology-based empowerment of coastal communities.

Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat pemasaran digital produk lokal melalui implementasi Sistem LESTARI sebagai platform pemasaran digital berbasis komunitas. Kegiatan ini dilaksanakan pada semester ganjil Tahun Akademik 2025/2026 dengan melibatkan kolaborasi dosen dan mahasiswa dari Universitas Negeri Makassar dan Universitas Hasanuddin. Program dilaksanakan di Desa Ajakkang, Kecamatan Soppeng Riaja, Kabupaten Barru, dengan melibatkan Kelompok Pengolah Hasil Perikanan (POKLAHSAR) Berkah, pelaku UMKM lokal, dan pemerintah desa. Metode pelaksanaan menggunakan pendekatan *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) melalui tahapan identifikasi masalah, analisis kebutuhan, pengembangan sistem, pelatihan dan pendampingan masyarakat, implementasi sistem, serta evaluasi program. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan kapasitas masyarakat dalam pemasaran digital, pengelolaan usaha, branding produk, serta pemanfaatan media sosial dan *marketplace* sebagai sarana promosi. Implementasi Sistem LESTARI juga mendorong peningkatan partisipasi masyarakat, tumbuhnya penggerak lokal (*local leader*), serta meningkatnya kesadaran masyarakat terhadap pentingnya transformasi digital dan pelestarian lingkungan mangrove sebagai bagian dari pembangunan ekonomi berkelanjutan. Dengan demikian, Sistem LESTARI terbukti efektif sebagai media penguatan pemasaran digital produk lokal sekaligus mendukung pemberdayaan masyarakat pesisir berbasis teknologi.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, POKLAHSAR, LESTARI System, Local Products, Ajakkang

1. Introduction

Despite having considerable potential, the community of Ajakkang Village, particularly fishermen groups and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), still faces various challenges in business development and the marketing of local products (Balai Riset Pemulihan Sumber Daya Ikan, 2022). The Fishery Product Processing Group (POKLAHSAR) Berkah, as the target partner, continues to rely on conventional marketing methods through local networks and direct sales in traditional markets. Limited digital literacy, restricted access to technology, the absence of

an integrated marketing system, and weak business management have hindered local products from reaching broader markets and achieving optimal added value.

These challenges indicate the need for digital transformation as a community empowerment strategy for coastal communities that is adaptive to technological advancements and market demands. Marketing digitalization not only functions as a medium for product promotion, but also enhances business management efficiency, expands market reach, strengthens the identity of local products, and promotes community economic independence (Doktoralina et al., 2025). In this context, the development of a community-based digital marketing system becomes a strategic approach to integrating production, promotion, distribution, and information management processes in a more effective and sustainable manner (Sopingi, 2025).

As an effort to address these challenges, this community service program developed the LESTARI System as a platform for strengthening the digital marketing of local products and promoting mangrove ecotourism development in Ajakkang Village. The LESTARI System was designed to support community business management through the integration of digital promotion, business management, and product information services. Through training and mentoring activities, community members were equipped with skills in utilizing digital platforms, implementing online marketing strategies, improving product packaging and branding, and managing promotional content that is adaptive to the evolving digital era.

This community service program aligns with the development direction of Ajakkang Village, which emphasizes strengthening the local economy, developing environmentally based tourism potential, and promoting digital transformation within coastal communities. Therefore, strengthening digital marketing through the LESTARI System is expected to serve as an innovative solution for supporting community empowerment, enhancing the competitiveness of local products, expanding market access, and creating an independent, adaptive, and sustainable economic ecosystem for coastal communities.

2. Methods

This community service program was conducted during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 Academic Year in Ajakkang Village, Soppeng Riaja District, Barru Regency, South Sulawesi. The program involved collaboration between lecturers and students from Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM) and Universitas Hasanuddin (Unhas) as a form of inter-university synergy in supporting the empowerment of coastal communities through digital transformation and the utilization of local potential.

The participants of the program consisted of productive community groups and coastal communities, including the Fishery Product Processing Group (*POKLAHSAR*) Berkah, local MSME actors, and the officials of Ajakkang Village. These target partners were selected due to their significant local resource potential in the fisheries sector, processed seafood products, and mangrove ecotourism, while still facing various limitations in digital marketing, business management, product branding, and the utilization of information technology.

Community involvement was carried out participatively from the stages of problem identification, program planning, and activity implementation to the evaluation and sustainability of the community service program. This participatory approach fostered active collaboration between the service team and the community in supporting the development of an adaptive and sustainable local economy.

The community service program was implemented using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which emphasizes active collaboration between the service team and the community in formulating solutions to the partners' problems (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). This approach was chosen because it enables community members to be directly involved in decision-making processes, system development, and the implementation of digital marketing strategies based on local needs. Through the PAR approach, the community was not merely positioned as the object of the program, but also as the primary subject in the process of digital transformation and local potential-based economic empowerment.

* Corresponding author:

E-mail address: nurwati_djaman@unm.ac.id

The implementation stages of the community service program began with the preparation and community organizing phase through field observations, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and coordination with village authorities and partner groups to identify the main problems related to the marketing of local products. At this stage, a community needs analysis, local potential mapping, and the formulation of development strategies for the LESTARI System as an integrated digital marketing platform were conducted.

The next stage involved the design and development of the LESTARI System, which was carried out collaboratively by the service team, programmers, students, and target partners. The system was digitally designed to support the promotion of local products, management of mangrove tourism information, product ordering transactions, business branding, and the dissemination of information through social media and digital platforms. After the system had been developed, the activities continued with training and mentoring sessions for the community regarding the use of digital platforms, online marketing strategies, product packaging, branding, product photography, promotional content creation, as well as marketplace and social media management.

Furthermore, the implementation stage was conducted through the direct utilization of the LESTARI System by the target partners in marketing processed local products and promoting mangrove tourism. The service team acted as facilitators and mentors in the operational process of the system, digital content management, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the digital marketing activities carried out by the community. Program evaluation was conducted periodically through observations, documentation, interviews, and analysis of community engagement in using the system. This evaluation aimed to measure the improvement of community capacity in digital marketing and business management, as well as the effectiveness of the LESTARI System implementation in supporting the empowerment of coastal communities based on local economic development and environmental sustainability.

The implementation flow of the community service program is illustrated in Figure 1, which includes the following stages: problem identification and partner needs analysis, program planning and community organizing, development of the LESTARI System, community training and mentoring, implementation of the digital marketing system, program evaluation, and the formulation of sustainability strategies for the community service program.

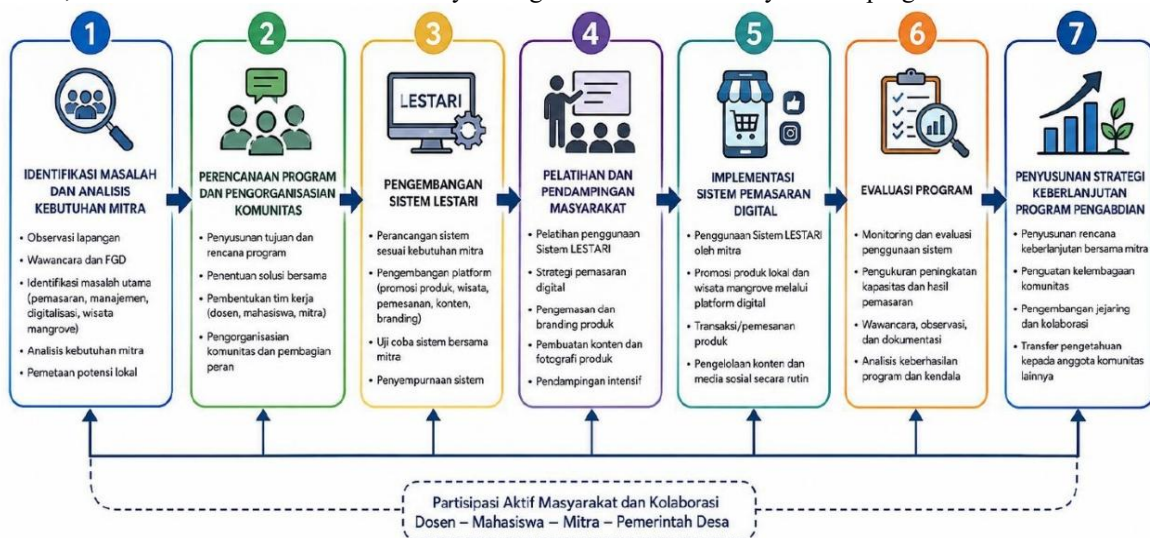


Figure 1. Stages of Community Service Program Implementation

3. Results and Discussion

The mentoring outcomes demonstrated significant changes in business management and the marketing of local products. Processed seafood products that were previously marketed on a limited scale began to be promoted through digital platforms and integrated social media. Community members also started to understand the importance of product identity through more attractive packaging, the use of product labels, and the presentation of more professional product information. The results of local product packaging development and the implementation of the LESTARI System as a digital marketing platform can be seen in Figure 2. These changes indicate an increasing public awareness of the

importance of digital transformation in supporting the sustainability of the local economy. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Djam'an et al. (2024), which revealed that the development of digital marketing systems can expand the promotional reach of local products, improve the quality of community business management, and strengthen the competitiveness of regional leading commodities through the utilization of digital platforms.

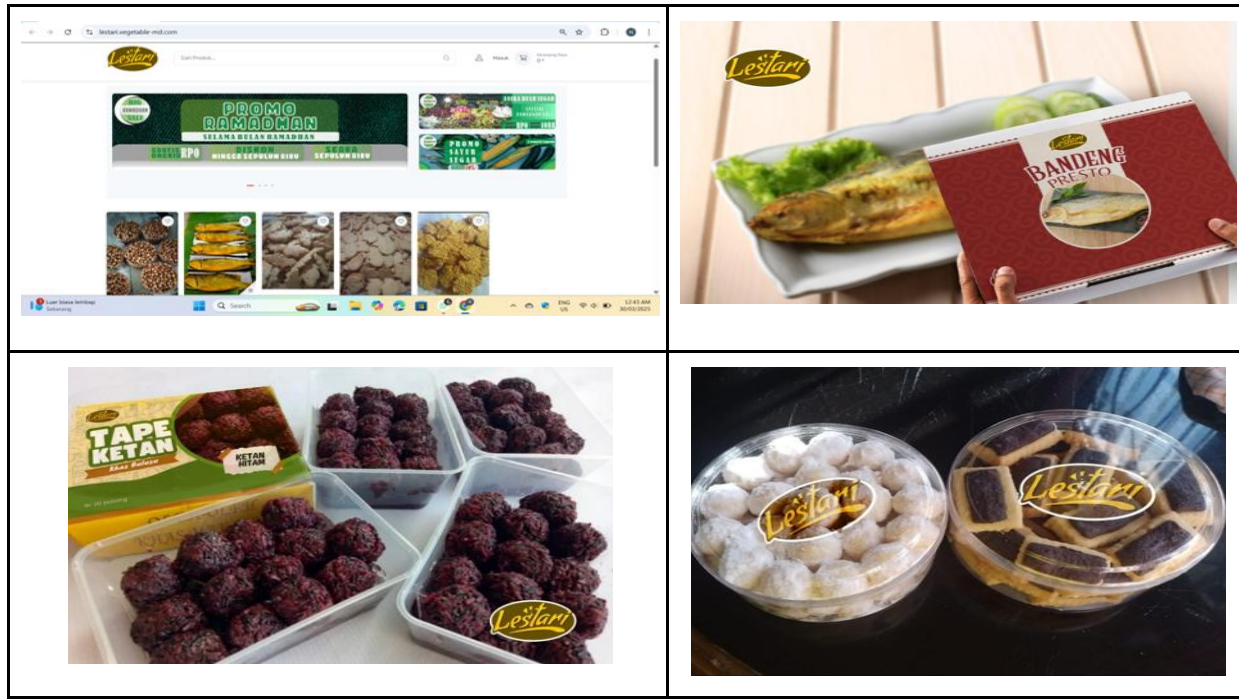


Figure 2. Development of Local Product Packaging and the LESTARI Digital Marketing Platform

From a social perspective, this community service program also encouraged the development of collective community awareness regarding the importance of collaboration and the sustainable management of local potential. The active involvement of community members in the training process, system development, and program implementation demonstrated stronger social participation compared to the conditions prior to the program. In addition, several members of the partner groups began to act as local leaders who assisted other members in utilizing digital platforms and independently managing product promotion activities. The implementation activities of the community service program, including training, mentoring, and the implementation of the LESTARI System, can be seen in Figure 3.

These conditions indicate that the community service program not only produced technical changes in marketing practices, but also promoted social transformation through increased community capacity, growing public self-confidence, and the establishment of a technology-based collaborative culture. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that strengthening local capacity, community participation, and community governance plays a significant role in promoting sustainable rural development in Indonesia (Bebbington et al., 2006). Furthermore, the findings are also in line with the community service results reported by Djam'an, F. et al. (2024), which demonstrated that local potential-based training programs can enhance community participation, strengthen group collaboration, and promote community economic independence through the development of productive local businesses.

The findings of this community service program are consistent with community empowerment theory, which emphasizes that active community participation in the planning and implementation processes of programs can sustainably enhance the social and economic capacity of communities (Zimmerman, 2000). The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach employed in this program enabled community members to be directly involved in problem identification, decision-making, and solution implementation processes, thereby fostering a sense of ownership toward the implemented program.



Figure 3. Community Mentoring Activities in Local Product Marketing Development

Furthermore, the development of the LESTARI System supports the concept of community-based digital transformation, which positions technology as a means of empowering local community economies. Activities related to strengthening the digital marketing of local products and evaluating the implementation of the community service program through the LESTARI System can be seen in Figure 4. These findings are also consistent with Achmad (2024), who stated that the utilization of digital technology in community economic empowerment can expand access to information, increase business productivity, and strengthen the sustainable economic independence of local communities.



Figure 4. Implementation of Community Capacity Building through the LESTARI System

The results of the community service program also demonstrated that the integration of digital technology in the marketing of local products was able to improve promotional effectiveness and expand the market reach of coastal communities. These findings are consistent with various studies stating that digital marketing can enhance the competitiveness of MSMEs through broader market access, increased product visibility, and stronger local business branding (Muchlis, 2025; Saraswati, 2025; Dwihandoko, 2025). Furthermore, community-based digital marketing strategies are considered capable of strengthening the identity of local products and supporting the sustainability of community businesses through the adaptive utilization of digital technology based on local potential (Panggabean, 2025; Silfiani, 2026).

In addition to generating economic impacts, this community service program also demonstrated changes in community behavior regarding the use of digital technology. Previously, the community tended to rely on traditional marketing practices; however, after the implementation of the program, community members began utilizing social media, digital platforms, and marketplaces as tools for business promotion and communication. This transformation indicates an

improvement in community digital literacy as well as the emergence of new awareness regarding the importance of innovation and technological adaptation in responding to the development of the digital economy.

Therefore, the implementation of the LESTARI System in the community service program in Ajakkang Village not only contributed to strengthening the digital marketing of local products, but also successfully fostered social transformation through increased community participation, strengthened community capacity, the emergence of local leaders, and greater public awareness of the importance of managing local potential through technology-based and environmentally sustainable approaches.

4. Conclusion

The community service program through strengthening the digital marketing of Ajakkang local products based on the LESTARI System successfully enhanced the community's capacity to utilize digital technology in supporting sustainable business management and the promotion of local potential. The program implementation demonstrated that the participatory approach based on Participatory Action Research (PAR) was able to encourage active community involvement in the processes of problem identification, solution planning, and collaborative program implementation. Through integrated training and mentoring activities, community members not only acquired technical skills in digital marketing, but also developed greater awareness of the importance of innovation, product branding, and the utilization of digital media as strategies for strengthening the local economy.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this community service program indicate that community-based digital transformation can serve as an effective instrument for empowering coastal communities when supported by social participation, community capacity building, and the development of technological systems that are aligned with local needs. The development of the LESTARI System not only functions as a digital marketing platform, but also serves as a means of integrating economic, social, and environmental aspects in supporting adaptive and sustainable community development. In addition to improving market access for local products, the program also fostered collective community awareness regarding the importance of mangrove ecotourism management as part of environmentally sustainable economic development.

Based on the results of the program implementation, it is recommended that the development of the LESTARI System be sustained through support from village governments, higher education institutions, and relevant stakeholders, particularly in strengthening digital infrastructure and providing advanced training programs. In addition, stronger collaboration among community groups and continuous mentoring are needed to ensure that communities are able to manage the platform independently and adaptively in response to the development of digital technology. Therefore, this program is expected to serve as a model for digital transformation-based empowerment of coastal communities that can be replicated in other regions with similar local potential characteristics.

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