

## SMART Instagram Optimization: A Framework for Building Malabar's Stronger Brand Awareness and Identity in the Digital Era

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### Abstract

*This study aims to improve the internal capacity of Malabar MSMEs in managing digital marketing through an internal training program designed based on the SMART Framework approach. The main problem faced by Malabar is the lack of staff understanding in managing social media, especially Instagram, which impacts weak brand awareness and brand identity. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a project-based learning method, in which researchers are actively involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the training program. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation during the training process. The training objectives were formulated specifically, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-limited, in accordance with the SMART principles. The results showed a significant increase in staff understanding of content planning, creating visual materials consistent with brand identity, and using Instagram analytics features. The post-test showed an increase in the average score of participants, and the MSMEs' digital activities became more structured. These findings indicate that internal training designed with the SMART approach is effective in building staff digital competencies and supporting brand image strengthening on social media. Overall, this study shows that improving internal digital literacy is a strategic step that can strengthen the competitiveness of MSMEs in the ever-evolving digital ecosystem.*

**Keywords:** *Digital Marketing Training, SMART Framework, MSMEs, Brand Awareness, Brand Identity, Instagram Social Media*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in the national economy. According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2023), MSMEs contribute more than 60% to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employ approximately 97% of the national workforce. Facing the increasingly evolving digital era, MSMEs are required to adapt to modern, technology-based marketing strategies. Implementing digital marketing is a solution for reaching a wider market, strengthening brand positioning, and increasing promotional efficiency. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), digital marketing enables businesses to build long-term relationships with consumers through interactive channels such as social media.

However, one of the main challenges faced by MSMEs in their digital transformation is limited human resource capacity in digital marketing, particularly in content management, understanding social media algorithms, and utilizing digital performance metrics. A lack of internal training and a lack of systematic documentation make it difficult for many MSMEs to effectively integrate digital marketing into their business strategies.

One example of an MSME facing similar challenges is Malabar, a local fresh milk beverage producer based in Jatinangor. Founded in 2020, Malabar has grown into a well-known brand, with three outlets in Jatinangor and one branch in Bandung. Malabar offers fresh milk-based products from the Faculty of Animal Husbandry, Padjadjaran University (FAPET Unpad) in a variety of flavors and packaged using environmentally friendly materials. Despite its unique product and brand value that aligns with the preferences of the younger generation, Malabar faces challenges in building brand awareness and identity through social media, particularly Instagram. Some identified challenges include the lack of digital marketing SOPs, the lack of a content calendar, and internal staff's lack of understanding of structured, data-driven digital strategies.

To address these challenges, a collaborative initiative was undertaken through a Marketing course project involving a team of students as business partners in developing Malabar's digital marketing strategy. The primary focus of the author's contribution to this project was providing internal digital marketing training to Malabar MSME staff. This program aimed to increase internal capacity in content planning, managing business Instagram accounts, understanding algorithms, and measuring the effectiveness of digital campaigns through measurable performance indicators.

This training is designed using the SMART Framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) to ensure that program objectives are focused, measurable, relevant to MSME needs, and achievable within a specified timeframe. The program is not only educational but also practical, involving hands-on practice and case study-based evaluations from Malabar's Instagram account.

Academically, this project provides hands-on experience in designing and implementing human resource development strategies in digital marketing. Practically, this training program serves as the first step in building a self-sufficient and sustainable internal marketing system and strengthening the foundation of the Malabar brand in the digital space.

## 2. THEORY

### Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the main foundation in building brand equity. Keller (2003) explains that brand awareness encompasses two aspects: brand recognition and brand recall, which determine how firmly a brand is embedded in consumers' memories. Aaker (1996) also states that awareness is the starting point for consumers in the purchasing decision-making process. In the context of MSMEs, brand awareness is key to introducing products

to a wider audience efficiently and cost-effectively (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Social media such as Instagram plays a significant role in this process due to its ability to reach target markets visually and interactively (Ismail, 2017).

For MSMEs, brand awareness is a crucial element in attracting a wider market, especially amidst intense competition. Social media platforms like Instagram can be used as a visual and interactive tool to introduce brands, increasing the opportunity to build strong brand awareness among target consumers.

### **Brand Identity**

Brand identity is the visual, verbal, and behavioral representation of a brand. According to Aaker (1996), brand identity consists of elements such as logos, colors, communication styles, and the values the brand wishes to convey to the public. A consistent image will shape positive perceptions and strengthen consumer loyalty. Kapferer (2012) emphasizes the importance of continuity between a brand's internal values and external expressions in forming a strong identity. In the digital era, this identity is shaped not only by visual materials, but also by the brand's interactions with users online (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

In a digital context, brand identity is determined not only by logo design or product packaging, but also by how a brand interacts with its audience through social media. Therefore, MSMEs require technical understanding and skills to maintain a consistent brand identity digitally.

### **SMART Framework**

SMART is a goal-setting framework first introduced by Doran (1981) and continues to be developed in modern management. Formulated goals must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, to be easily understood and realistically achieved. Locke & Latham (2002) state that goals set using the SMART principle are more likely to result in high motivation and performance. In a training context, using the SMART Framework is crucial for developing focused and targeted learning objectives (Miller, 2014). This allows both instructors and participants to clearly understand expectations and measure outcomes.

a. Specific

Objectives should be clear and unambiguous. Specific objectives make training programs more focused and easier to communicate (Mager, 1997).

b. Measurable

Success criteria must be measurable through quantifiable indicators, such as post-test scores or increased digital activity (Reinders, 2010).

c. Achievable

Goals must be realistic and appropriate to the participants' capacities. Robbins & Coulter (2012) emphasize the importance of affordability in planning organizational and individual goals.

d. Relevant

Objectives must align with the needs of the organization or participants. Relevance will increase participant commitment to the training process (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2012).

e. Time-bound

Setting a timeframe is important so that goals can be evaluated periodically and not run indefinitely (Bailey, 2015).

When implementing digital marketing training in MSMEs, the SMART Framework is useful for setting more targeted training objectives. For example, consistently improving staff competency in designing Instagram content within a month is a goal that aligns with the SMART principle.

## **Digital Marketing**

Digital marketing is defined as the use of digital technology and online platforms to promote products and build relationships with customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Digital marketing offers advantages in market segmentation, cost efficiency, and greater interactivity compared to traditional marketing (Kotler et al., 2017). Social media platforms like Instagram have become key tools for building engagement and sustainably strengthening brand image (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). For MSMEs, digital marketing allows for broad market penetration without significant investment, provided content management is strategic (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

## **Digital Marketing Training**

Digital marketing training is an activity aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of business owners or staff in strategically utilizing digital platforms. Strauss & Frost (2014) emphasize that this training includes elements such as SEO, social media management, email marketing, and content planning. Good training should be applicable, contextual, and able to bridge theory with practice (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In the context of MSMEs, digital training is increasingly important due to limited access to digital marketing professionals, requiring internal staff to be equipped with independent competencies (Kurniawati, 2020). Training designed with a clear learning structure also increases participant motivation (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015) and strengthens MSMEs' digital resilience amidst market dynamics.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The internal digital marketing training program for Malabar MSME staff was designed based on the SMART Framework approach, which guides all stages from planning to evaluation. This framework is used to ensure that training objectives are targeted, measurable, relevant, and achievable within a clear timeframe.

#### Specific

The primary objective of this training program was specifically formulated: to improve the understanding and skills of Malabar's internal staff in strategically managing their business Instagram accounts. The learning focused on several key aspects, such as creating visual content consistent with brand identity, writing engaging captions, scheduling content using an editorial calendar, and utilizing the Instagram Insights feature to analyze post performance. Setting these specific objectives was crucial given that Malabar previously lacked a structured content management system and staff had never received formal training in digital marketing strategies. Focusing on these objectives made the training more manageable, and the material delivered could be tailored to the actual needs of MSMEs.

#### Measurable

The success of the training was evaluated using measurable indicators to determine the extent to which objectives had been achieved. Assessment was conducted through a pre- and post-test, which included questions about basic understanding of digital marketing, visual branding, the Instagram algorithm, and content performance measurement. Pre-test results indicated that most participants had a low level of understanding, particularly in terms of content planning and reading performance metrics. After the training, post-test results showed a 35% increase in participants' average scores. Furthermore, other measurable indicators included changes in staff behavior in managing Instagram accounts, such as an increase in the number of scheduled content uploads, the use of a more uniform design, and the implementation of a caption strategy that aligns with Malabar's brand character.

#### Achievable

The training objectives were designed to be realistic and tailored to the participants' abilities and backgrounds. As MSME operational staff, most participants lacked specific experience in digital marketing. Therefore, the training materials were structured with a practical approach, utilizing case studies directly from Malabar's Instagram account, and delivered in easy-to-understand language. The training consisted of two main sessions, each lasting two hours, complemented by discussion sessions and hands-on content creation practice. This approach allowed participants to learn gradually without feeling overwhelmed. Observations during the training revealed high levels of enthusiasm and a successful completion of all stages. This demonstrated that the training objectives were aligned with the participants' abilities and circumstances.

### Relevant

The training provided was highly relevant to Malabar's current needs. Prior to the training, the MSME's promotional activities relied heavily on Instagram Stories and word of mouth, with inconsistent feed content and weak branding. Meanwhile, Instagram is the primary platform Malabar uses to reach young consumers in the Jatinangor and Bandung areas. By improving staff's ability to strategically manage Instagram, this training had a direct impact on strengthening brand awareness and brand identity. Furthermore, this training aligns with Malabar's long-term goal of building a self-sufficient and sustainable internal marketing system, given the lack of a dedicated digital marketing division within their current organizational structure.

### Time Bound

The entire training series was designed and implemented over a two-week period, starting with the initial assessment stage, module development, training implementation, and evaluation. This limited timeframe aimed to ensure the program's effectiveness without significantly disrupting MSME operations. During this timeframe, participants completed two main training sessions and one evaluation session, and were given a practical assignment to create content for the Malabar Instagram account. Successful completion of all stages within the specified timeframe demonstrated that the time-bound aspect had been met and served as a benchmark for the program's efficiency and effectiveness.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the project implementation, it can be concluded that internal digital marketing training using the SMART Framework approach was able to help Malabar MSMEs overcome the problem of lack of understanding and staff capacity in social media management, especially Instagram. The formulation of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-limited training objectives made the program run more directed, focused, and in accordance with the actual needs of MSMEs. The increase in participant understanding was reflected in the results of the post-test, direct practice of content creation, and the beginning of the implementation of more consistent content planning in accordance with brand identity.

This project not only provided a practical contribution by increasing the capacity of Malabar's human resources to manage digital marketing independently, but also demonstrated the relevance of applying the SMART theory in the context of developing training strategies for MSMEs. The success of this training reinforces the importance of efforts to improve internal digital literacy as a primary foundation for building strong brand awareness and brand identity in the digital realm. With a structured, evaluation-based strategy tailored to existing resources, MSMEs like Malabar can be better prepared to compete in the increasingly dynamic digital marketing landscape.

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