Original Research Paper

Enhancing Community Empowerment with Digital Marketing for Social Forestry Enterprises in West Nusa Tenggara

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Abstract: The training on *Strategi Peningkatan Pemasaran Produk KUPS melalui Digital Marketing* was conducted at Hotel Aruna Senggigi, West Lombok Regency, on May 20, 2025, with the participation of social forestry groups (KUPS), forestry extension officers, and local stakeholders. The program aimed to strengthen the capacity of KUPS in adapting to digital markets. Participants gained a clearer understanding of the distinctions between selling, marketing, and branding, while also being introduced to current e-commerce trends in Indonesia, including Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop. Qualitative evaluation revealed increased confidence, enthusiasm, and readiness to experiment with digital platforms, despite challenges such as limited internet access and digital literacy. The training demonstrated that digital marketing is not only a technical skill but also a pathway toward independence, competitiveness, and sustainability for social forestry enterprises.

Keywords: branding and marketing; digital marketing; e-commerce platforms; social forestry groups (KUPS)

Introduction

Forests are central to ecological sustainability and community welfare. In Indonesia, with more than 120 million hectares of forest, the challenge of balancing conservation and livelihood remains pressing (Sosial Bisnis Indonesia, 2025). Social forestry has been introduced as a strategic initiative within the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework, offering communities legal rights to manage forest areas for a specified period under government regulations. This initiative not only supports local economies but also contributes to biodiversity conservation and global climate change mitigation (GoSustain, 2025).

Community-based enterprises under social forestry (*Kelompok Usaha Perhutanan Sosial*/KUPS) produce diverse non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as honey, coffee, rattan, durian, candlenut, walnut, and nutmeg, alongside ecosystem services and ecotourism (Pers Pangannews, 2025; Rubis ID, 2024). However, despite its potential, social forestry faces challenges including limited access to information, weak monitoring, and difficulties in marketing forest products. Many KUPS still rely on conventional marketing methods, which restrict their competitiveness in wider markets (Pers Pangannews, 2025).

Digital marketing provides a promising solution to these challenges. Kannan and Li (2017) define digital marketing as an adaptive, technology-enabled process through which firms collaborate with customers and partners to co-create, deliver, and sustain value. At the same time, rapid

technological developments have reshaped consumer behavior. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have transformed how people consume content and engage with products. Today, some non-celebrity social media influencers (SMIs) have achieved celebrity-like status due to their widespread popularity (Gensler & Rangaswamy, 2025). Without adaptation, social forestry enterprises risk being excluded from these evolving markets.

The digital shift is multifaceted. Digitization refers to converting analog information into digital formats, digitalization enhances business processes through digitization, and digital transformation reshapes business models altogether (Chebo & Dhliwayo, 2024). While digital marketing stands as an independent discipline, it is not confined to specific platforms or advertising types (Rizkita et al., 2025). For social forestry groups, this means moving beyond traditional practices and embracing digital tools to reach broader audiences.

Previous initiatives have highlighted the importance of equipping rural enterprises with digital skills. In Indonesia, forestry extension programs have begun introducing digital marketing training, yet many groups remain at the early stages of adoption. The Regional Forestry Office of Central Java, Branch IV, for example, organized a *Temu Fungsi* gathering on September 10, 2024, at Wana Wisata Tledog Asri, Kabunan Village, Sukorejo District, Kendal Regency. The event carried the theme *"Marketing Strategies for Community Enterprises through Digital Marketing"* and was attended by 23 forestry extension officers and five ecosystem controllers (Dinas Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan Provinsi Jawa Tengah, 2024).

At the same time, consumer behavior continues to evolve. With the abundance of offerings available, convenience has become a decisive factor in consumption decisions. Today, people expect one-click solutions for transportation, medical consultations, food delivery, groceries, and entertainment. Marketers respond by designing integrated offerings that combine diverse products and services, often in real time, to deliver customized value to customers (Gensler & Rangaswamy, 2025).

In this context, digital marketing training is crucial. It empowers social forestry groups to share their narratives, showcase their products, and reach broader markets. Beyond simply teaching technical skills, the training serves as a pathway toward self-reliance, stronger competitiveness, and long-term sustainability, helping community enterprises grow while protecting Indonesia's forests.

Method

The community service activity was carried out through a training program designed to strengthen the capacity of social forestry groups (KUPS) in adopting digital marketing strategies. The training emphasized practical skills, including the use of websites, social media platforms, and online storytelling techniques to promote non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and other community-based services.

The activity took place at Hotel Aruna Senggigi, West Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, on May 20, 2025, under the title *Strategi Peningkatan Pemasaran Produk KUPS melalui Digital Marketing.* Approximately 50 participants attended, consisting of members of social forestry groups and forestry extension officers who came from Bima and Sumbawa Islands.

The training was structured to combine:
1. Knowledge sharing sessions by introducing concepts of digital marketing, consumer trends, and the importance of convenience in modern markets.
2. Hands-on practice by guiding participants to create digital content, manage social media accounts, and explore online marketplaces.
3. Collaborative discussions by encouraging participants to share experiences, challenges, and strategies for marketing forest products.
4. Mentoring and follow-up by ensuring that participants could continue applying digital marketing skills in their works after the training.

This participatory approach was chosen to ensure that the training not only transferred knowledge but also built confidence and independence among KUPS members. The program directly addressed local needs while contributing to broader goals of forest conservation and community empowerment.

Results and Discussions

The training on *Strategi Peningkatan Pemasaran Produk KUPS melalui Digital Marketing* held at Hotel Aruna Senggigi, West Lombok Regency, on May 20, 2025, was attended by approximately 50 participants, including members of social forestry groups (KUPS), forestry extension officers, and local stakeholders, as shown in Figure 1. The facilitators were lecturers from the Faculty of Food Technology and Agroindustry, University of Mataram, whose expertise provided both theoretical grounding and practical guidance. Their involvement ensured that the training was not only technically sound but also contextually relevant to the needs of local communities.

Participants learned to distinguish between selling, marketing, and branding, concepts that had often been blurred in their previous practices. As explained by selling focuses on the transaction itself which is getting products into customers' hands. Marketing is broader, involving strategies to attract and engage customers through research, promotion, and communication. Branding, meanwhile, is about identity: the emotional connection and trust that make customers choose one product over another. For KUPS, this distinction helped to understand that success in digital markets requires more than offering products. They realized that selling honey or coffee or palm sugar in local markets is not enough; they need marketing strategies to reach wider audiences and branding to build recognition and loyalty (Melon Branding, 2025). The materials provided during the training are presented in Figure 2.

Fig 1. Facilitators and participants of the digital marketing training

The training also introduced participants to current e-commerce trends in Indonesia. According to APJII and IPSOS surveys, Shopee remained the most accessed platform in 2025, with 53.22% of respondents identifying it as their primary choice (bintangbisnis.com, 2025). Shopee continues to dominate the market, Tokopedia has strengthened its position by supporting local brands, and TikTok Shop has rapidly gained popularity through "shoppertainment," a concept that combines live shopping events with direct purchasing. These platforms were presented as opportunities for KUPS to expand their reach. For instance, honey producers could take advantage of Shopee's promotional campaigns, while coffee growers could align with Tokopedia's *Lokal Mendunia* initiative (kompas.tv, 2025).
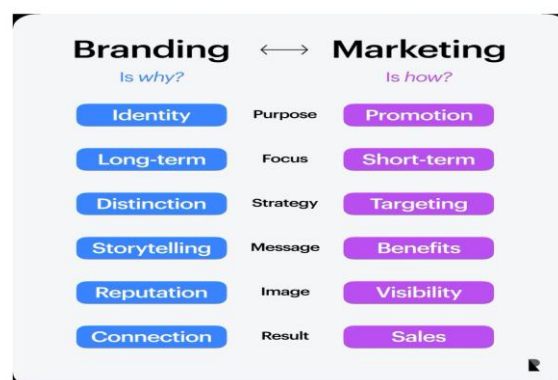
Fig 2. Materials delivered to participants

Several participants shared personal stories about struggling to market their products beyond their villages, and how digital platforms now offered hope for broader recognition. The discussions also revealed challenges such as limited internet access, lack of digital literacy, and concerns about maintaining consistent online engagement. Yet, these challenges were met with optimism, as participants recognized that digital marketing is not about mastering every tool at once but about starting small, telling authentic stories, and gradually expanding their reach. Figure 3 illustrates the participants' engagement throughout the training.

Fig 3. The engagement during the training

Overall, the training reinforced the idea that digital marketing is not merely a technical intervention but a pathway toward independence, competitiveness, and sustainability. By combining selling, marketing, and branding with e-commerce strategies, social forestry enterprises can strengthen their role in both community welfare and forest conservation.

Conclusions

1. The *Strategi Peningkatan Pemasaran Produk KUPS melalui Digital Marketing* successfully enhanced the capacity of social forestry groups (KUPS) to adapt to digital markets.
2. Participants gained a clearer understanding of the differences between selling, marketing, and branding.

3. Awareness of current e-commerce trends, particularly Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop encouraged participants to explore new opportunities for honey, palm sugar, coffee and other forest products.

Recommendations

1. KUPS should focus on building strong brand identities. Branding efforts should emphasize authenticity, sustainability, and community values.
2. Training should not stop at introductory sessions. Future programs need to include advanced modules such as digital content creation, search engine optimization (SEO), and analytics.

Acknowledgement

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