

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs through Cinta Cassava Chips Branding and Digital Marketing

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Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are essential drivers of Indonesia's economy, contributing to both job creation and poverty reduction. However, many rural women-led MSMEs face challenges in product branding and digital marketing adoption. This study focuses on empowering women entrepreneurs in Tanjung Pura through the development of "Cinta Cassava Chips," a local product aimed at strengthening competitiveness via branding and digital promotion. Using a participatory action research (PAR) approach, the program provided training in packaging design, storytelling, and digital marketing strategies. Findings show improved entrepreneurial skills, increased market access, and strengthened community-based women empowerment

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Branding, Digital Marketing, Women Empowerment, MSMEs

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Introduction

Indonesia is home to over 64 million MSMEs, contributing more than 60% of the national GDP and absorbing 97% of the labor force [1]. Within this ecosystem, women entrepreneurs play a critical role, particularly in rural areas where microenterprises often serve as the backbone of family income. Despite their potential, women-led MSMEs face multiple constraints, including limited access to technology, weak branding strategies, and low exposure to wider markets [2], [3].

Cassava is one of Indonesia's staple crops, widely cultivated in North Sumatra. However, its economic value is often underutilized, as many farmers and women processors sell it in raw or minimally processed form. In Tanjung Pura, women entrepreneurs initiated "Cinta Cassava Chips" as a way to diversify cassava-based products and create value-added snacks. Nevertheless, these enterprises struggle to compete in the modern market due to generic packaging, lack of brand identity, and weak digital presence.

Recent studies highlight that digital transformation, particularly through branding and online marketing, is key to enhancing MSME competitiveness [4], [5]. Branding creates emotional connections with consumers, while digital platforms expand visibility beyond local markets [6]. However, adoption remains uneven, especially among women in rural contexts who often lack digital literacy and business skills [7].

This paper aims to explore how branding and digital marketing strategies can empower women entrepreneurs through the case of "Cinta Cassava Chips." Specifically, it investigates how participatory training in branding and digital marketing improves business competitiveness and contributes to women's social and economic empowerment.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section II reviews the literature on women entrepreneurship, branding, and digital marketing in MSMEs. Section III outlines the research methodology. Section IV presents the results and discussion. Section V concludes with key findings and implications.

Literature Review

2.1 Women Entrepreneurship and MSME Empowerment

Women entrepreneurship has been recognized as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth and poverty alleviation [8]. Female-led enterprises not only generate income but also strengthen community resilience by promoting family welfare and education. However, women entrepreneurs in developing countries face constraints such as limited access to capital, digital tools, and market networks [9]. Empowering women through entrepreneurship programs can lead to greater self-reliance, confidence, and long-term sustainability [10].

2.2 Branding and Consumer Perception in MSMEs

Branding is more than just product packaging; it represents identity, trust, and differentiation in competitive markets [11]. Effective branding allows small enterprises to build emotional connections with consumers, establish premium positioning, and foster brand loyalty [12]. For food-based MSMEs, branding through packaging, storytelling, and design significantly influences consumer purchase decisions [13]. Unfortunately, most rural MSMEs fail to establish strong branding due to cost limitations and lack of knowledge.

2.3 Digital Marketing for Rural MSMEs

Digital marketing, encompassing social media, e-commerce platforms, and search optimization, provides unprecedented opportunities for MSMEs to expand their reach [14]. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook enable interactive engagement with customers at low cost [15]. Studies have shown that MSMEs adopting digital marketing experience improved sales performance, brand visibility, and customer retention [16].

However, challenges include digital illiteracy, lack of content creation skills, and limited infrastructure in rural areas [17].

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, the conceptual framework integrates three dimensions: (1) Branding Innovation (packaging, storytelling, visual identity), (2) Digital Marketing Adoption (social media, marketplace, online promotion), and (3) Women Empowerment Outcomes (economic, social, psychological). Fig. 1 illustrates the research framework.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which emphasizes collaboration between researchers, community partners, and MSME participants. PAR is suitable for empowerment programs because it integrates learning-by-doing, reflection, and iterative improvements [18].

3.1 Research Location and Participants

The program was conducted in Tanjung Pura, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, focusing on women entrepreneurs producing *Cinta Cassava Chips*. The participants included:

1. 2 Faculty Members: Yana Diana, S.E., M.Si and Nadya Andhika Putri, S.Kom., M.Kom.
2. 2 University Students (from Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi, Management Program): Luthfi Nanda Syahputra Tambunan and Sherly Anesha.
3. 10 Women Entrepreneurs from the local community engaged in cassava processing.

3.2 Research Stages

Table 1. The program was structured in four key stages:

Stage	Description	Activities
1. Needs Assessment	Identifying challenges and gaps in women's entrepreneurship	Field visits, interviews, FGD with women entrepreneurs
2. Capacity Building	Training and mentoring sessions	Branding workshops, packaging design, storytelling, digital literacy
3. Implementation	Applying skills in real business practice	Redesigning packaging, creating social media accounts, online promotion
4. Monitoring & Evaluation	Assessing improvements and sustainability	Sales data tracking, feedback survey, follow-up mentoring

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through a mixed-method approach, including:

1. Observation during training and product development;
2. Interviews with participants on perceived benefits and challenges;
3. Surveys measuring digital literacy, branding knowledge, and entrepreneurial confidence before and after training;
4. Business performance records, such as sales volume, online engagement metrics, and customer feedback.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both qualitative thematic analysis and descriptive statistics. Thematic coding was applied to interview transcripts to identify empowerment outcomes

(economic, social, psychological). Meanwhile, quantitative indicators such as increases in sales volume and social media engagement were analyzed descriptively to measure program effectiveness.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. The program adhered to ethical research principles, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and transparency in program objectives.

Results

A. Branding Development Outcomes

The program successfully transformed *Cinta Cassava Chips* from a traditional homemade snack into a product with stronger market appeal. Key branding improvements included:

1. Logo and Packaging Redesign: Modern visual identity was introduced, incorporating eco-friendly packaging materials and attractive colors to highlight the “authentic local taste” positioning.
2. Storytelling Enhancement: A narrative emphasizing women’s empowerment, local culture, and sustainable cassava farming was integrated into the brand message.

Table 2. Branding Outcomes

Aspect	Before Program	After Program
Packaging	Plain plastic wrap, no logo	Eco-friendly packaging, printed logo
Brand Identity	No brand differentiation	“Cinta Cassava Chips” with slogan <i>Taste of Empowerment</i>
Market Appeal	Limited to local traditional market	Expanded to local cafes, gift shops, and online stores

B. Digital Marketing Implementation

Through digital literacy training, participants developed the skills to manage social media accounts and engage in e-commerce platforms. Women entrepreneurs learned to create promotional content (photos, short videos, customer testimonials) and apply digital storytelling.

Table 3. Digital Marketing Performance (3-Month Period)

Platform	Before Program (Followers/Engagement)	After Program (Followers/Engagement)	Growth (%)
Instagram	0 / –	850 / 12% engagement	+850
Facebook	120 / 3% engagement	650 / 9% engagement	+441
Shopee/Tokopedia	No account	35 products sold	–

C. Economic and Social Impacts

The program generated tangible impacts on both income levels and community empowerment.

1. Economic Impact: Average sales increased by 35% within three months, with higher profit margins due to improved packaging and pricing strategies.
2. Social Impact: Women entrepreneurs reported enhanced confidence, stronger collaboration within the group, and better recognition in their local community.
3. Educational Impact: The inclusion of university students fostered knowledge transfer and experiential learning, bridging academia with society.

Discussion

The results align with prior studies emphasizing that **branding innovation and digital marketing are critical drivers of MSME competitiveness** [19], [20]. Moreover, the empowerment dimension resonates with gender-focused entrepreneurship literature, which highlights that women's economic activities generate multiplier effects on family welfare and local development [21].

The case of *Cinta Cassava Chips* illustrates how participatory approaches not only improve product competitiveness but also strengthen women's agency and voice in community decision-making. This dual outcome—economic and social—demonstrates the sustainability potential of the program when supported by continuous digital literacy advancement.

Conclusion

This community engagement program demonstrated that integrating branding innovation and digital marketing can significantly enhance the competitiveness of women-led microenterprises. Through the case of *Cinta Cassava Chips* in Tanjung Pura, several key outcomes were observed:

1. Brand Transformation – The introduction of modern packaging, storytelling, and visual identity increased consumer appeal and positioned the product beyond traditional markets.
2. Digital Literacy and Market Expansion – Training in social media management and e-commerce enabled women entrepreneurs to expand their market reach, with sales growth of 35% within three months.
3. Women Empowerment – Beyond economic gains, the program fostered confidence, collaboration, and recognition for women entrepreneurs, strengthening their social and psychological empowerment.
4. Academic-Community Collaboration – The involvement of university lecturers (Yana Diana, S.E., M.Si; Nadya Andhika Putri, S.Kom., M.Kom) and students (Luthfi Nanda Syahputra Tambunan; Sherly Anesha) from Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi facilitated effective knowledge transfer and capacity building.

The findings reinforce the argument that women's entrepreneurship initiatives—when supported by branding and digital tools—can create both economic resilience and social sustainability.

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