

Enhancing Digital Marketing Skills and Business Innovation to Increase Competitiveness and Household Income of Home-Based Workers

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Abstract—This community service program aimed to enhance digital marketing skills and business innovation among home-based workers in the PPR Seri Sena Community, Kangar, Perlis, Malaysia. The activity was conducted on 13 April 2026 and involved ten participants from the partner community. The program was implemented through a needs assessment, preliminary observation, interviews and discussions with the community, preparation of training materials, an interactive workshop, practical demonstrations, question-and-answer activities, and program evaluation. The training focused on social media utilization, digital marketing, promotional features, digital branding, product differentiation, and business innovation. The evaluation results showed that participants' understanding of social media utilization for business purposes increased from 44% before the program to 83% after the activity, representing an improvement of 39 percentage points. Understanding of social media promotional features increased from 20% to 75%, representing an improvement of 55 percentage points. These findings demonstrate that participatory and practice-oriented digital marketing training can effectively strengthen the digital competencies of home-based workers and support their readiness to improve business competitiveness. Nevertheless, the program was limited by the small number of participants and the short-term evaluation period, so further mentoring and longitudinal evaluation are recommended to examine its effects on business performance and household income.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Business Innovation; Home-Based Workers; Social Media; Business Competitiveness; Community Empowerment

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed business practices, customer engagement, and market competition, making digital marketing one of the most important competencies for business sustainability in the digital economy (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Digital platforms enable entrepreneurs to expand market reach, strengthen customer relationships, and improve marketing efficiency, while digital transformation has simultaneously increased the need for digital literacy, creativity, adaptability, communication skills, and business innovation (Kovács & Zarándné, 2022; Neuvonen & Pecoraro, 2024). These competencies are increasingly essential not only for large enterprises but also for micro and home-based businesses seeking to improve competitiveness, business resilience, and household income. Consequently, strengthening digital marketing capabilities and business innovation has become a strategic priority in community empowerment programs aimed at promoting inclusive economic growth and sustainable entrepreneurship (Fadhillah & Yuniarti, 2023; Susanto et al., 2021).

Governments, universities, and development organizations have increasingly promoted digital entrepreneurship to strengthen local economies and empower vulnerable communities. Home-based workers possess considerable business potential but frequently depend on conventional marketing approaches that limit market access, customer engagement, and business growth (Susanto et al., 2021). Although many already have access to smartphones and social media, these technologies are rarely utilized strategically for branding, digital promotion, or customer communication (Erawan et al., 2023). In addition, limited capability in business innovation often results in homogeneous products, weak branding, unattractive packaging, and low value-added offerings, reducing competitiveness in increasingly dynamic market (Chairina et al., 2022; Fauziyanti et al., 2023). Therefore, digital marketing capability and business innovation should be developed simultaneously because these complementary competencies enable entrepreneurs to create innovative products while effectively reaching broader markets and responding to changing consumer preferences (Putri et al., 2024).

The partners involved in this community service program are home-based workers operating micro-scale businesses that rely primarily on household resources as their main source of family income (Mahendra et al., 2025). A preliminary needs assessment revealed several key challenges, including dependence on direct selling and word-of-mouth promotion, limited understanding of digital marketing concepts, ineffective utilization of social media, inadequate digital branding, and minimal knowledge of content creation and customer targeting (Djunaedi et al., 2022; Erawan et al., 2023).



Participants also demonstrated limited innovation capability, reflected in products with insufficient differentiation, unattractive packaging, weak business planning, and low confidence in adopting digital technologies for business development (Putri et al., 2024). These conditions have contributed to stagnant sales, restricted market expansion, and unstable household income despite the commercial potential of their products (Karim, 2022). Accordingly, an integrated intervention combining digital marketing training and business innovation is needed to improve business competitiveness and economic resilience.

Previous community service programs have shown that digital marketing training successfully improves digital literacy, online promotion, and marketing capability among MSMEs (Djunaedi et al., 2022; Hendriadi et al., 2019; Susanto et al., 2021). Other initiatives have emphasized business innovation through product development, business model improvement, design thinking, entrepreneurship, and information technology capability, producing positive impacts on innovation and business performance (Chairina et al., 2022; Fauziyanti et al., 2023; Fitriyani et al., 2025). Nevertheless, most existing programs have treated digital marketing and business innovation as separate intervention themes. Program evaluations have generally focused on improvements in knowledge, digital literacy, or product innovation without comprehensively examining their combined contribution to business competitiveness and household income (Putri et al., 2024). Furthermore, most interventions have targeted MSMEs in general rather than home-based workers, whose business characteristics require more specific empowerment strategies due to limited capital, production capacity, and market access (Mahendra et al., 2025).

The present community service program addresses this gap by integrating digital marketing skills and business innovation within a unified capacity-building framework specifically designed for home-based workers. The program combines structured training, practical workshops, mentoring, and continuous evaluation to strengthen participants' competencies in digital branding, content creation, social media marketing, product differentiation, customer engagement, and business innovation (Chairina et al., 2022; Priyanto et al., 2025). Unlike previous initiatives, this program also emphasizes household income as a primary indicator of empowerment success alongside improvements in digital literacy and entrepreneurial competence (Karim, 2022). This integrated approach is expected to strengthen business competitiveness by expanding market access, improving customer trust, increasing product differentiation, and supporting sustainable business growth.

Strengthening digital marketing skills and business innovation has become increasingly urgent because digital transformation continues to reshape consumer behavior and business competition across various sectors (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Without these competencies, home-based workers face greater challenges in maintaining competitiveness, expanding markets, and sustaining business performance in the digital economy (Neuvonen & Pecoraro, 2024). By integrating innovation capability with digital marketing practices, participants are expected to develop innovative products while effectively communicating product value through digital platforms, thereby increasing sales opportunities, strengthening household income, and improving economic resilience (Karim, 2022; Priyanto et al., 2025). Moreover, the program supports broader national and global efforts to promote digital inclusion, community empowerment, and sustainable local economic development through technology-based entrepreneurship (Fadhillah & Yuniarti, 2023).

Based on these considerations, this community service program aims to enhance the digital marketing skills and business innovation capabilities of home-based workers in order to improve business competitiveness and increase household income through an integrated empowerment approach (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Neuvonen & Pecoraro, 2024). Through practical training, mentoring, and continuous assistance, participants are expected to strengthen digital literacy, entrepreneurial competence, market expansion, and business sustainability. Academically, this program contributes by proposing a comprehensive community empowerment model that integrates digital marketing and business innovation within a single intervention framework, extending previous community service initiatives that primarily addressed these competencies separately. The findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for universities, government institutions, and community organizations in designing sustainable empowerment programs that foster inclusive economic development through digital entrepreneurship (Lubis et al., 2026).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Recent Literature Review

Digital marketing has become a strategic capability that enables business actors to strengthen customer relationships, expand market reach, and improve competitiveness through the effective utilization of digital technologies (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). The rapid development of digital platforms requires entrepreneurs to possess competencies in digital communication, online promotion, customer engagement, creativity, adaptability, and technological literacy to remain competitive in dynamic markets (Kovács & Zarándné, 2022; Neuvonen & Pecoraro, 2024). These competencies are particularly important for micro-enterprises and home-based workers because digital technology provides cost-effective opportunities to access broader markets and improve business sustainability (Susanto et al., 2021). Alongside digital marketing, business innovation plays a vital role in enhancing competitiveness through product development, branding, packaging improvement, business model refinement, and technology adoption (Chairina et al., 2022; Fauziyanti et al., 2023). Previous studies have shown that combining innovation capability with digital marketing strengthens entrepreneurial confidence, encourages creativity, and improves business performance. Therefore, this community service

program adopts an integrated capacity-building approach that combines digital marketing, business innovation, participatory learning, and practical mentoring to improve the competitiveness and household income of home-based workers (Lubis et al., 2026; Priyanto et al., 2025).

2.2 Location, Date, and Participants

The community service program was conducted at the PPR Seri Sena Community, Kangar, Perlis, Malaysia, on 13 April 2026. The program involved ten home-based workers operating micro-scale businesses as a source of household income. Participants were selected based on their active involvement in home-based economic activities, willingness to improve their entrepreneurial competencies, and commitment to participating throughout the program. The implementation adopted a participatory learning approach through discussions, demonstrations, practical exercises, and mentoring to encourage active engagement between facilitators and participants. The relatively small number of participants enabled intensive guidance, individualized feedback, and continuous mentoring, thereby supporting more effective competency development in digital marketing and business innovation. This learning environment was expected to strengthen participants' business competitiveness while contributing to improved household income and sustainable community empowerment.

2.3 Stages of Community Service Implementation

The implementation consisted of several systematic stages. The first stage involved a preliminary site visit to identify participants' socioeconomic conditions, business characteristics, marketing practices, and existing challenges. This was followed by interviews and group discussions to analyze participants' needs, expectations, and business opportunities while encouraging active participation in identifying appropriate solutions. The findings indicated that participants required practical knowledge of digital marketing, social media utilization, digital branding, and business innovation.

Based on these findings, the preparation stage included developing training materials, learning modules, presentation media, practical exercises, mentoring guidelines, and logistical arrangements. Continuous coordination with the partner community ensured that the program was implemented efficiently using interactive learning methods.

The core activity was an interactive workshop covering digital branding, social media marketing, content creation, customer engagement, online promotion, product differentiation, packaging improvement, and business innovation. Participants engaged in demonstrations and hands-on practice to develop promotional content, optimize digital platforms, and generate innovative business ideas. The workshop concluded with an interactive discussion and question-and-answer session that enabled participants to share experiences, discuss business challenges, and receive practical recommendations from the facilitators. Figure 1 below shows the speaker presenting the material to the participants who were listening enthusiastically.



Figure 1. Interactive workshop covering digital branding

The final stage consisted of reflection, evaluation, and program closure. Participants provided feedback on the relevance of the training while demonstrating their understanding of digital marketing concepts and business innovation strategies. The evaluation indicated improved knowledge, greater confidence in utilizing digital platforms, and stronger awareness of the importance of continuous innovation. The program concluded with recommendations encouraging the sustainable application of digital marketing and business innovation through ongoing collaboration and knowledge sharing among community members, thereby supporting long-term business competitiveness and household economic resilience.



Figure 2. CSR Stage

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Initial Analysis of the Community Service Implementation

The community service program was implemented according to the planned stages, beginning with the identification of participants' needs and continuing through capacity-building activities focusing on digital marketing and business innovation. The preliminary assessment conducted before the implementation indicated that most participants had limited experience in utilizing social media strategically for business promotion and customer engagement. Although several participants had previously used social media platforms, their utilization was generally limited to personal communication rather than systematic business promotion. This initial condition demonstrated that the participants possessed basic digital access but lacked practical competencies in applying digital marketing strategies to improve business performance. Consequently, the workshop materials were designed to emphasize practical learning experiences that directly addressed the participants' actual business challenges through demonstrations, discussions, and guided practice. Throughout the implementation process, participants actively engaged in each learning activity, indicating that the selected training topics were consistent with their expectations and immediate business needs. The participatory learning approach also facilitated effective communication between facilitators and participants, allowing business-related problems to be discussed collaboratively while encouraging the exchange of practical experiences among participants. Overall, the initial implementation confirmed that the community service activities were aligned with the primary objective of strengthening digital marketing competencies and fostering business innovation to improve the competitiveness of home-based workers.

The implementation of the workshop demonstrated that the participants responded positively to the learning activities because the training materials were closely related to the challenges encountered in managing their home-based businesses. During the practical sessions, participants showed increasing enthusiasm in learning how to optimize social media platforms, develop attractive promotional content, and strengthen product branding through digital technologies. The interactive learning environment encouraged participants to exchange experiences, discuss marketing constraints, and identify potential business opportunities that had previously received limited attention. Facilitators observed that participants gradually became more confident in applying digital marketing concepts after receiving demonstrations and hands-on guidance throughout the workshop. In addition to digital marketing, participants also gained a better understanding of the importance of business innovation, particularly in improving product presentation, packaging, differentiation, and customer value. These learning experiences enabled participants to recognize that business competitiveness is influenced not only by product quality but also by the ability to communicate product value effectively through digital media. Consequently, the integration of digital marketing and business innovation within a single community service program provided participants with a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable business development strategies. The positive participation observed during the implementation suggests that the program successfully addressed the participants' immediate learning needs while establishing a foundation for improving their entrepreneurial competencies and household economic resilience.

The overall implementation of the community service program demonstrated that the planned activities were carried out systematically and effectively in accordance with the objectives established during the preparation stage. The integration of needs assessment, participatory workshops, practical demonstrations, and interactive discussions enabled participants to acquire relevant knowledge and practical skills that addressed their business challenges. Throughout the implementation process, participants maintained active involvement in every learning session, indicating that the training approach successfully encouraged collaborative learning and continuous interaction between facilitators and the community. The practical orientation of the activities also enabled participants to directly relate the learning materials to the conditions of their own businesses, thereby increasing the relevance and applicability of the program outcomes. Furthermore, the implementation process revealed that combining digital marketing competencies with business innovation created a more comprehensive learning experience than delivering either topic independently. This integrated approach provided participants with a clearer understanding of how digital technologies and innovation strategies could be applied simultaneously to improve product visibility, customer engagement, and business competitiveness. Based on these observations, the community service program achieved its initial implementation objectives by creating an effective learning environment that supported participants' competency development and strengthened their readiness to adopt digital business practices. Therefore, the subsequent evaluation focused on assessing the participants' initial competencies prior to the intervention and measuring the changes achieved after the completion of the community service activities.

3.2 Analysis and Participant Recapitulation Before the Program

Before the implementation of the community service program, an initial assessment was conducted to identify the participants' baseline understanding of digital marketing and the utilization of social media for business activities. The assessment involved ten home-based workers from the PPR Seri Sena Community, Kangar, Perlis, Malaysia, who represented small-scale household businesses with varying levels of digital experience. The results indicated that the participants had basic access to smartphones and social media platforms; however, these technologies were primarily used for personal communication rather than business promotion. Quantitative findings showed that the average level of understanding regarding the use of social media for business purposes was 44%, indicating that participants had not yet maximized digital platforms to support marketing activities. Furthermore, participants' understanding of promotional features available on social media platforms was only 20%, suggesting limited knowledge of digital advertising tools and

online customer engagement strategies. These findings demonstrate that although digital technology was accessible to participants, their practical competencies in applying digital marketing remained relatively low and required systematic capacity-building. Therefore, the initial assessment confirmed the necessity of implementing a community service program that integrated digital marketing training and business innovation to address the identified competency gaps and improve participants' business competitiveness.

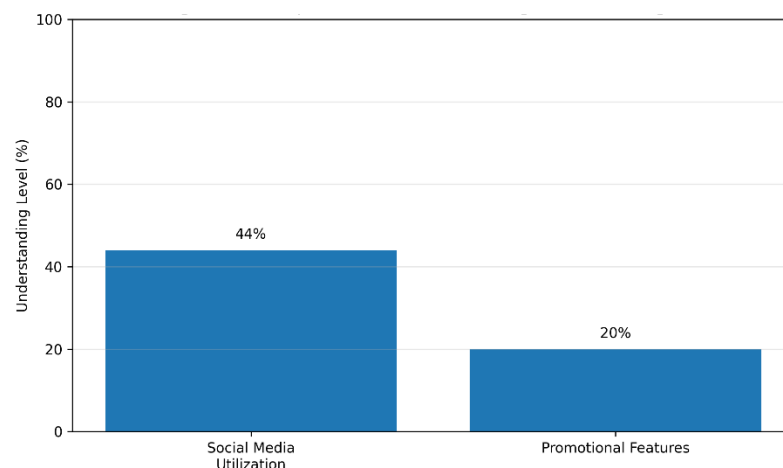


Figure 3. Participants' Initial Understanding Before the Program

Figure 3 illustrates the initial condition of the ten participants before the community service program was implemented. The participants' understanding of social media utilization for business purposes was 44%, indicating that less than half of the measured competency had been achieved at the beginning of the program. Meanwhile, understanding of promotional features on social media was considerably lower at 20%, indicating a more substantial initial competency gap in the use of specific digital promotional tools. These results demonstrate that participants had relatively limited knowledge regarding the strategic use of social media for business development. The findings also indicate that general familiarity with social media did not automatically translate into the ability to use social media for business promotion. Therefore, the baseline results shown in Figure 3 provided a clear justification for implementing a practical digital marketing workshop for the partner community.

The preliminary assessment also revealed that participants experienced difficulties in utilizing social media features strategically to support business development despite their regular use of digital communication platforms. Most participants were unfamiliar with creating promotional content, optimizing business profiles, and applying digital branding strategies to attract potential customers. During the initial discussion session, several participants reported that product promotion was primarily conducted through personal contacts and informal recommendations, resulting in limited market reach and business growth. These conditions indicated that the participants had not yet integrated digital technology into their daily business operations as a strategic marketing instrument. The limited understanding of promotional features further suggested that participants required practical guidance rather than theoretical explanations alone to improve their digital competencies. Consequently, the identified baseline conditions became the primary reference for determining the training content, practical exercises, and mentoring activities implemented throughout the community service program. Overall, the results of the initial assessment confirmed that strengthening digital marketing capability and business innovation was highly relevant to the actual needs of the partner community and provided an appropriate starting point for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention.

The overall findings of the preliminary assessment demonstrated that the participants possessed strong motivation to develop their businesses but had not yet acquired sufficient competencies to utilize digital technologies as effective marketing tools. The relatively low baseline levels of understanding regarding social media utilization and promotional features indicated that participants required structured training accompanied by practical mentoring to strengthen their digital marketing capabilities. These initial conditions also highlighted the importance of integrating business innovation into the training program so that participants would not only improve their promotional skills but also enhance the value and competitiveness of their products. The assessment results served as an essential reference for designing learning materials, determining appropriate instructional methods, and selecting practical activities that were relevant to the participants' business characteristics. Establishing the participants' baseline competencies also enabled the community service team to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing conditions before and after the implementation of the program. In addition, the initial assessment provided a clear benchmark for measuring changes in participants' understanding, confidence, and readiness to apply digital marketing strategies in their respective home-based businesses. Therefore, the participant recapitulation before the implementation of the community service program confirmed the existence of competency gaps that justified the need for the intervention while providing a reliable foundation for assessing the outcomes achieved after the completion of the training activities. The subsequent analysis focuses on

evaluating the impact of the program and examining participants' responses to determine the extent to which the community service objectives were successfully achieved.

3.3 Analysis of Program Impact and Participant Satisfaction

The post-program evaluation indicated that the community service activities produced a positive impact on participants' understanding of digital marketing concepts and the practical use of social media for business development. Based on the evaluation results, the average level of participants' understanding of social media utilization increased from 44% before the training to 83% after the completion of the program, representing an improvement of 39 percentage points. This finding suggests that the workshop and mentoring activities successfully enhanced participants' knowledge of utilizing digital platforms as effective marketing tools for their home-based businesses. Participants demonstrated a better understanding of how social media could be used to increase product visibility, strengthen communication with customers, and expand market opportunities. The interactive learning approach, which combined theoretical explanation with practical exercises and direct mentoring, enabled participants to apply newly acquired knowledge more confidently during the training sessions. In addition to improving technical competencies, the program also encouraged participants to recognize the strategic role of digital marketing in strengthening business competitiveness within an increasingly digital business environment. These findings indicate that the implementation strategy adopted in the community service program effectively addressed the participants' initial competency gaps and contributed to achieving the primary objective of improving digital marketing capability among home-based workers.

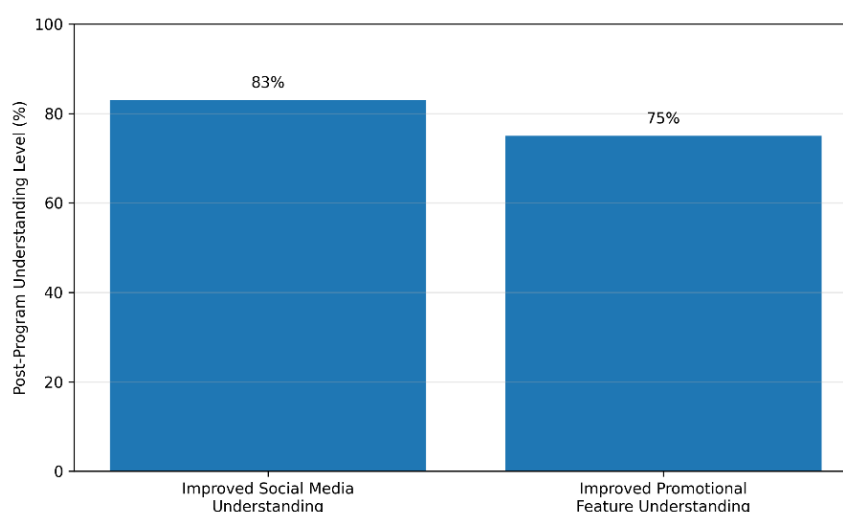


Figure 4. Program Impact Based on Post-Program Understanding

Figure 4 presents the impact of the community service program based on participants' post-program understanding. The level of understanding regarding social media utilization increased to 83%, while understanding of promotional features reached 75% after the training activities. These results indicate that the program successfully improved participants' knowledge in both general social media utilization and the more specific application of promotional features. The higher post-program scores suggest that the workshop materials, practical explanations, discussions, and question-and-answer activities were relevant to the participants' learning needs. The results also demonstrate that the program was able to address the initial digital marketing competency gaps identified before the activity. However, because numerical satisfaction data were not provided, Figure 4 should be interpreted as a visualization of program impact based on learning outcomes, rather than a direct measurement of participant satisfaction. A separate satisfaction chart would require additional data, such as the percentage of participants who were satisfied, very satisfied, or dissatisfied with the program.

3.4 Analysis of the Comparison Before and After the Program

The comparison between the pre-program and post-program conditions demonstrates a significant improvement in participants' understanding of social media utilization for business purposes. Before the implementation of the community service program, participants' level of understanding was recorded at 44%, which increased to 83% after the workshop, representing an improvement of 39 percentage points. This result indicates that the training activities effectively strengthened participants' knowledge of the strategic use of social media for business promotion. The participatory learning approach, which combined explanations, discussions, and practical demonstrations, enabled participants to relate the material to their own home-based business activities and address the initial competency gap in digital marketing.

The second indicator examined participants' understanding of promotional features available on social media platforms. Prior to the activity, only 20% of participants demonstrated an understanding of how these features could be utilized for business purposes. Following the workshop, the percentage increased to 75%, reflecting an improvement of

55 percentage points. This substantial increase suggests that the practical components of the training were particularly effective in introducing participants to the functional use of promotional tools. Participants gained a better understanding of how social media features can enhance product visibility, communicate promotional messages, and expand customer reach. The findings also indicate that participants' initial limitations were primarily related to insufficient knowledge rather than limited access to digital technology.

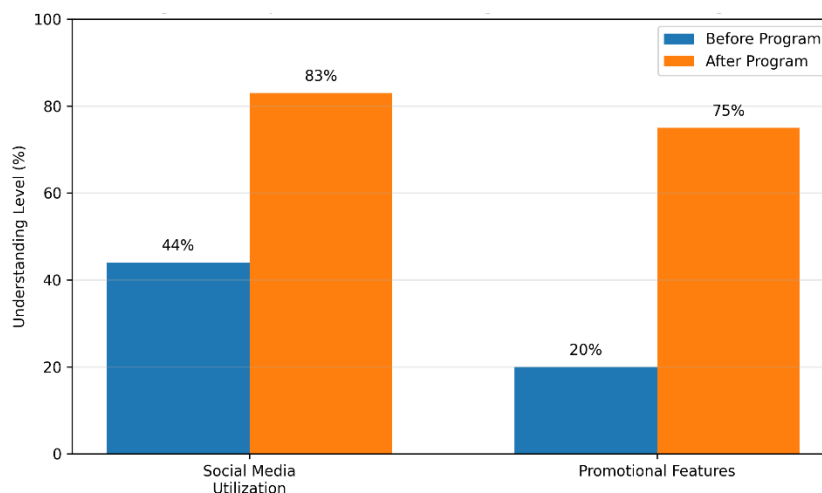


Figure 5. Comparison of Understanding Before and After the Program

Figure 5 compares the participants' understanding before and after the implementation of the community service program. Understanding of social media utilization increased from 44% before the program to 83% after the program, representing an improvement of 39 percentage points. Understanding of promotional features increased from 20% to 75%, representing an improvement of 55 percentage points. The comparison demonstrates that the largest improvement occurred in participants' understanding of social media promotional features. This result indicates that the practical workshop was particularly effective in addressing participants' initial limitations in understanding the functional use of digital promotional tools. The findings also demonstrate that the program successfully transformed a relatively low baseline level of digital marketing understanding into a substantially higher post-program level. Overall, Figure 3 confirms that the community service intervention produced positive short-term learning outcomes among the ten participants from Komuniti PPR Seri Sena Kangar, Perlis, Malaysia.

Overall, both indicators demonstrate positive changes in participants' digital marketing competencies. The results suggest that participants were generally familiar with social media but had limited understanding of its business-oriented applications before the program. The workshop successfully bridged this gap by promoting more strategic and purposeful use of digital platforms for business development. Although the evaluation involved only ten participants, the improvements provide meaningful evidence of the program's immediate learning outcomes and its contribution to enhancing the digital marketing capabilities of home-based workers.

3.5 Discussion

The community service program demonstrates that structured digital marketing training can effectively improve participants' understanding of social media utilization for business purposes. The increase from 44% to 83% indicates that participants gained practical knowledge of using social media for promotion, communication, and market expansion. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that digital marketing competencies require both access to digital platforms and the ability to apply them strategically (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). The practical and participatory learning approach also proved effective in addressing participants' initial competency gaps. Participants' understanding of social media promotional features improved substantially from 20% to 75%, reflecting the program's success in strengthening their ability to utilize digital promotional tools. This result aligns with recent studies highlighting the importance of technical, communication, and strategic competencies in digital marketing (Kovács & Zarándné, 2022; Neuvonen & Pecoraro, 2024). The workshop's focus on practical demonstrations contributed significantly to this improvement. The program also integrated digital marketing with business innovation by encouraging participants to communicate product value, branding, and differentiation through digital platforms. This integrated approach supports previous findings that innovation and digitalization jointly enhance business competitiveness. Although conducted with only ten participants and evaluated in the short term, the results demonstrate meaningful learning outcomes and provide a foundation for continued digital marketing adoption, business innovation, and future community empowerment initiatives.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service program successfully enhanced the digital marketing understanding of home-based workers in the PPR Seri Sena Community, Kangar, Perlis, Malaysia. The initial assessment involving ten participants showed that understanding of social media utilization for business purposes was 44%, while understanding of social media promotional features was only 20%. Following the implementation of the workshop, interactive discussions, practical demonstrations, and question-and-answer activities, these levels increased to 83% and 75%, respectively. These results represent improvements of 39 percentage points in social media utilization and 55 percentage points in understanding promotional features. The findings indicate that the program effectively addressed the participants' initial competency gaps and strengthened their readiness to apply digital marketing strategies in their home-based businesses. The integration of digital marketing and business innovation also provided participants with a broader understanding of how digital platforms can support product promotion, branding, customer engagement, and business competitiveness. However, the activity was limited by the small number of participants, the short-term implementation period, and the absence of long-term measurements related to actual sales growth, household income, customer expansion, and sustained adoption of digital marketing practices. Therefore, future programs should involve more participants, provide continuous mentoring, and conduct follow-up evaluations to determine whether the improved competencies are translated into sustainable business performance and increased household income.

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