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Strengthening Marketing Strategies in Organic Agricultural Products Through Organic Farmer Training in Indonesia

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Abstract: This Community Service (PKM) activity aims to improve the marketing skills of organic plant farmers in Indonesia through online training focused on digital marketing strategies, branding development, and distribution network expansion. The method used was participatory training, involving 30 farmers as a sample, with data collection carried out through pre-test and post-tests to measure changes in participants' knowledge and skills. The results showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding of organic product marketing, with the average pre-test score of 2.5 increasing to 4.2 in the post-test. This increase is mainly seen in the ability of participants to utilize social media and e-commerce platforms to market their products. In addition, qualitative interviews showed that participants felt more confident in developing product branding and expanding marketing networks, although challenges related to internet infrastructure were still faced in some areas. Post-training mentoring also provides additional support that helps participants implement the strategies learned. In conclusion, this training is efficacious in improving the marketing skills of organic farmers. It can be a model that can be applied more widely to strengthen the competitiveness of organic agricultural products in Indonesia.

Keywords: Digital marketing; Training; Organic products; Farmers; Branding

Introduction

Organic farming has become a rapidly growing agricultural sector in various countries, including Indonesia (Ashari et al., 2018; Fitriani, 2018). Organic agriculture proliferates in Indonesia and is driven by government initiatives, community empowerment, and increasing market demand. The Organic Farming Village Program in Semarang Regency exemplifies this growth, with farmers reporting high perceptions of the benefits of organic farming, such as improved economic and environmental outcomes (Sebastian & Prihtanti, 2024).

In addition, rural skills development programs have empowered communities by increasing their knowledge of organic practices, leading to better utilization of resources and health benefits (Anisah & Muniruddin, 2024). The global organic food market is projected to grow significantly, reflecting increasing consumer awareness of health and environmental issues (Roy et al., 2024). However, challenges remain, including food security issues among organic rice farmers, who often allocate most of their income to food expenditure (Triyono et al., 2024). In addition, while organic fertilizers improve soil quality, their adoption is hampered by accessibility and economic factors (Suparwata & Jamin, 2024).

Despite these advances, the focus on quantity rather than quality in rural markets poses challenges, requiring further support for farmers to increase organic production sustainably. Due to economic pressures, many rural farmers are more focused on high yields to get immediate financial returns, which often leads them to neglect sustainable quality and practices (Roy et al., 2024). The global organic food market is expected to increase from 215 billion in 2023 to 412 billion in 2027, indicating an increasing demand for quality products (Roy et al., 2024). However, to ensure sustainability, government support is needed in the form of financial assistance and training so that farmers can adopt more environmentally friendly organic practices (Duvaleix et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2018; Piñeiro et al., 2020; Terziev, 2017).

National strategic planning is essential to raise awareness and provide adequate resources for organic production (Hamim et al., 2021; Kusmana & Garis, 2019; Mayrowani, 2016; Terziev, 2017). Emphasizing quality over quantity will not only increase market competitiveness but also ensure long-term sustainability in rural areas, mainly by integrating local agricultural traditions with modern organic practices (Bisht et al., 2020; Knickel et al., 2018; Kovalchuk, 2020; Pretty, 2008; Reganold & Wachter, 2016). However, the economic challenges facing farmers remain a significant barrier, and without adequate intervention, the quantity-focused production cycle is likely to continue.

With the increasing public awareness of the importance of health and environmental sustainability, the demand for organic agricultural products continues to increase (Aceleanu, 2016; Falguera et al., 2012; Reganold & Wachter, 2016; Thakur et al., 2022). Organic products are not only identified through their natural cultivation methods without chemical pesticides but also offer sustainable economic benefits to farmers. However, behind this potential, there are not many challenges faced by organic farmers, especially in terms of the right marketing strategy to optimize the distribution and sales of their products (Wulandari, 2019).

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of marketing strategies for agricultural products, especially organic products. For example, research by Khorniawati (2014) and Kipdiyah et al. (2013) emphasizes that one of the main obstacles to the development of organic agriculture in Indonesia is the limited access of farmers to markets and knowledge related to marketing. In addition, research results from Arfianty et al. (2024) and Nurjati (2021) revealed that despite the increasing demand for organic products, farmers often lack the skills to market their products effectively and compete with conventional products.

However, studies on efforts to strengthen marketing strategies through special training for organic farmers are still relatively limited. Most previous research only focused on aspects of organic cultivation or product certification without paying adequate attention to marketing. Therefore, this PKM article offers

a novelty in terms of a comprehensive marketing approach with a focus on practical training for organic crop farmers. Through this training, it is hoped that farmers can master better marketing skills, ranging from understanding consumer needs to applying digital technology for product marketing.

This article is essential because the organic agriculture sector, despite its potential, still needs intervention in terms of marketing to compete with conventional agricultural products (Rachmawati & Gunawan, 2020). Without the right marketing strategy, organic products from Indonesia farmers find it difficult to get a decent place in the domestic and international markets.

This article aims to identify and address the knowledge gap among organic farmers regarding effective marketing strategies through training programs. This program is expected to strengthen farmers' ability to face market competition and increase their income through more optimal distribution.

Method

This Community Service (PKM) activity aims to measure the effectiveness of marketing strategy training provided to organic plant farmers in Indonesia. The research approach used is applied research with a descriptive quantitative design. This method involves collecting data before and after the training to assess the impact of the training on participants' marketing knowledge and skills. The following are the systematic stages of this research method:

Design of Implementation of PKM Activities and Reporting of Activities

The reporting of PKM activities uses a descriptive quantitative approach to evaluate the influence of training on farmers' marketing knowledge and skills. This PKM activity is implemented longitudinally by measuring the initial conditions before training and conditions after training (pre-test and post-test).

Participants of PKM Activities

The participants in this study are organic plant farmers in Indonesia who participate in the training program. The determination of participants was carried out by purposive sampling with the criteria of farmers who are active in organic farming and are interested in improving their marketing skills. The invited participants were 30 trainees who fully participated in the program.

The main instrument used to evaluate this activity is a closed questionnaire containing questions about marketing knowledge and skills before and after the training. The questionnaire is compiled based on a Likert

scale of 1-5, where respondents will be asked to assess their level of understanding and ability in terms of 1) Knowledge of basic concepts of organic product marketing, 2) The use of digital marketing strategies (ecommerce, social media); 3) Ability to develop organic product branding; 4) Determination of product pricing and distribution; and 5) Marketing networks that have been utilized.

Implementation of Data Collection

1. Pre-test

Pre-test data collection is carried out before the training starts. Participants fill out a questionnaire to evaluate their knowledge of organic product marketing.

2. *Intervention (Training)*

The training was conducted online through three sessions, including marketing materials, the use of digital technology, and the development of distribution networks. This training followed a question and answer session and a live product marketing simulation.

3. Post-test

After the training, a post-test assesses participant knowledge and changes in marketing skills. Post-test data was collected using the same questionnaire as the pre-test so that it can be compared directly.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis methods and paired t-tests. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to identify the average change in participants' knowledge and skills after training. In contrast, the paired t-test was used to test the significance of the difference between the pretest and post-test results. This aims to see if the training significantly improves the marketing abilities of participants.

Training Success Evaluation

In addition to quantitative analysis, the success of the training was also evaluated qualitatively through interviews with several selected participants. This interview was conducted to get more in-depth input about the participants' experiences during the training, the challenges they faced, and the implementation of the marketing strategies that have been learned. The interview results complement the quantitative results and provide a more comprehensive picture.

Report of Research Results

The results of the study were reported systematically by including the main findings from the pre-test and post-test data, the analysis of the impact of training, and the qualitative evaluation of participant interviews. This report is expected to contribute to developing future organic product marketing training programs and is a reference for further research in this field.

With this method, it is hoped that the resulting PKM articles can provide a solid and empirical analysis of the effectiveness of marketing strategy training for organic plant farmers. The results of this research are also expected to offer practical solutions to marketing challenges faced by organic farmers in Indonesia.

Result and Discussion

Result

Pre-test and Post-test results

Before the training, participants were given a pretest to assess their knowledge and skills related to organic product marketing. The average pre-test score of the participants showed that most farmers had a limited basic understanding of marketing strategies, especially in digital marketing and product branding. The average pre-test score was 2.5 on a scale of 5, which indicates that participants have limited understanding and skills in terms of 1) General marketing understanding, 2) Use of e-commerce platforms, 3) Product branding development, and 4) Distribution network.

After the training, a post-test was conducted to measure the improvement of participants' knowledge and skills. The average post-test score rose to 4.2 on a scale of 5, which indicates a significant improvement in their knowledge and skills. Participants reported having a better understanding in terms of 1) Identifying the target market for organic products, 2) Building more vital product branding, 3) Using social media and ecommerce platforms for sales, and 4) Increasing the reach of distribution, both local and international.

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Aspects	Pre-test	Post-test
Marketing understanding	2.6	4.1
Use of e-commerce	2.3	4.3
Product Branding	2.5	4.4
Pricing and distribution	2.7	4.2

From the above results, there was a significant improvement in all aspects of marketing taught during the training, especially in the use of e-commerce and product branding. The paired t-test results showed a p-< p-value of 0.05, which indicates that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is statistically significant.

Qualitative Interview Results

In addition to the quantitative results, interviews with some participants showed that they found the

training helpful in overcoming the marketing challenges they had previously faced. For example, one participant stated, "I am now more confident in using social media as a promotional tool and have started selling products through online platforms." Another participant added that the branding training helped them create a more precise identity for their organic products.

Most participants also revealed that mentoring after the training was very beneficial because they could ask questions and get further guidance regarding implementing the marketing strategies they learned. Participants also shared the challenges of implementing digital marketing in areas with limited internet access. Still, they acknowledged that the training provided alternative solutions, such as utilizing local marketing networks.

Discussion

The results of this study show that marketing strategy training for organic crop farmers has succeeded in significantly increasing the knowledge and skills of participants. The increase in post-test scores, which reached an average of 4.2 on a scale of 5, shows that farmers now have better abilities in marketing their organic products, especially in using digital technology. This aligns with the findings of several studies, which state that digital marketing training can help farmers increase sales and reach a broader market (Pramanik et al., 2023; Utami, 2020).

The significant increase in e-commerce and social media as marketing tools shows that farmers are adopting technology in their marketing strategies. These findings are also supported by research by Herman et al. (2023), which underscores the importance of digital skills in facing competition in the global market.

In addition, the branding training module has proven effective, and participants can develop a more robust product identity after the training. Effective branding is crucial in organic product marketing because it can help differentiate products from competitors, as revealed in several previous studies (Murnawan et al., 2023; Pratama et al., 2023).

However, the study also identified several challenges faced by participants, especially related to digital infrastructure in rural areas. Some participants expressed difficulties in accessing the internet consistently, which could limit the effectiveness of digital marketing. This challenge underscores the importance of developing technological infrastructure in these regions, as revealed by several previous studies (Donoriyanto et al., 2023; Rachmawan et al., 2024).

Overall, this study makes an essential contribution to filling the gap of previous research that focuses more on aspects of organic product cultivation and certification (Nugraha, 2021) by paying more attention to developing marketing skills for farmers. This article also provides practical solutions to the marketing challenges faced by organic farmers in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This Community Service (PKM) activity has succeeded in improving organic plant farmers' knowledge and marketing skills in Indonesia, especially in digital marketing, branding, and distribution network development. The pre-test and post-test results showed a significant improvement in farmers' understanding and ability to utilize social media and e-commerce platforms to expand the market for their products. The training also provides essential insights into organic product pricing and distribution strategies, which help improve product competitiveness in local and international markets. In addition, post-training mentoring offers additional support that allows participants to implement more effective marketing strategies. Despite the challenges associated with internet access in rural areas, the training provides practical solutions relevant to farmers' ability to overcome these constraints. Therefore, this program shows that digital technology-based marketing training is an important step to improve the welfare of organic farmers and strengthen the sustainability of the organic agriculture sector in Indonesia.

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