



# Efforts to Improve MSME Commodity Marketing in Tasikmalaya Regency during the Covid-19 Pandemic through Training and Mentoring Programs

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very bad impact and decreased income in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. An effort is needed that can increase the marketing of MSME products that are in accordance with consumer conditions. There are still many MSME actors who market their products in stores and in the market which are not in accordance with the conditions in the field. Continuous training and assistance is needed in introducing a marketing system that is in accordance with the conditions of the times. One of them is marketing using online media. Based on these circumstances, this study aims to determine efforts to increase the marketing of MSME commodities in Tasikmalaya Regency during the Covid-19 pandemic through training and mentoring programs. The method used in this research is descriptive quantitative. The data used were obtained from interviews with the help of a questionnaire given to MSME actors. Based on the results obtained, the use of online media in marketing MSME products was 19%. From the results of the analysis, it is found that the level of ability to use digital technology is 26%, which means that there are still many MSME actors who do not understand using digital technology, especially in creating online stores. Therefore, continuous training and assistance is needed in improving the understanding of MSME actors and keeping up with the times.

*Keywords:* Covid-19, MSMEs, commodities, online media

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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic that has occurred since the beginning of 2020 has caused an economic crisis that has an impact on various sectors of the national economy (Hasan et al., 2021; Patria, 2021; Munandar et al., 2020). The weakening of economic activity did not only occur in the formal sector. The informal sector, specifically Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), is the affected party (Bahtiar, 2021; Fijay et al., 2021; Andriyani et al., 2021). Large-scale social restrictions have an impact on the economic activities of MSMEs to freely move, for example, buying and selling activities which are mostly carried out directly and face to face experience disturbances or obstacles. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded at least around 84% of Micro and Small Enterprises

(MSMEs) stated that they experienced a decline in income where the decline in consumer demand/purchasing power was one of the main factors. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on MSMEs. According to the data released by the Insight Center (KIC), the majority of MSMEs (82.9%) felt the negative impact of this pandemic and only a small portion (5.9%) experienced positive growth.

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed consumer behavior and the map of business competition that business actors need to anticipate due to activity restrictions. Consumers do more activities at home by utilizing digital technology (Arianto, 2020; Tosida, 2020; Marune and Hartanto, 2021). Meanwhile, the changing industrial landscape and the new competition map are marked by four business characteristics, namely Hygiene, Low-Touch, Less-Crowd, and Low-Mobility. Companies that are successful in the pandemic era are companies that can adapt to these 4 characteristics. Thus, business actors including MSMEs need to innovate in producing goods and services in accordance with market needs. They can also develop various new business ideas that can also contribute to solving the socio-economic problems of the community due to the impact of the pandemic (social entrepreneurship).

MSMEs are the most important pillars in the Indonesian economy. Therefore, a training program is needed for MSME actors in improving the marketing of their business commodities. Training and assistance for MSMEs to rise during the pandemic needs to be carried out by various parties, especially local governments (Mahuda et al., 2021; Tambunan, 2011; Syuhada and Gambett, 2013; Ridwan et al., 2020). Through the existence of training and mentoring programs, it is expected to increase the economic growth of MSME actors, so that national economic recovery can be achieved. Training and mentoring programs can be in the form of using online media and increasing the ability of MSME actors to use digital technology.

Departing from the explanation above, this study aims to discuss efforts to improve the marketing of the competencies of MSME actors in Tasikmalaya Regency after the Covid-19 pandemic through training programs. It is hoped that the results of the research can increase the level of ability of MSME actors in marketing their products during the pandemic. Thus, the economic growth of MSMEs can increase.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Materials**

This type of research is descriptive quantitative, while the data used in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct interviews with MSME actors. While secondary data was obtained through official sources such as the Central Statistics Agency, the Indakop Service and research results related to increasing MSME economic activity during the Covid 19 pandemic. To support the validity of the data, observations and direct observations were also carried out in the field to find out the condition of MSMEs in each country. each location.

### **2.2. Methods**

The method used in this training program is the Practical Quantitative method, which means that the results of intra-campus research can be applied directly to the community in a practical way. The understanding given is more on qualitative approaches such as discussion, consultation, mentoring and joint evaluation. However, the discussion session provided a little quantitative explanation about the marketing techniques for MSME commodities during the pandemic. The implementation of training and mentoring activities is expected to increase the marketing of MSME commodities. The stages of MSME training and mentoring activities are as follows:

- a) Conduct field observations
- b) Management of permits to the district and related MSME institutions.
- c) Implementation of activities by providing workshop materials:

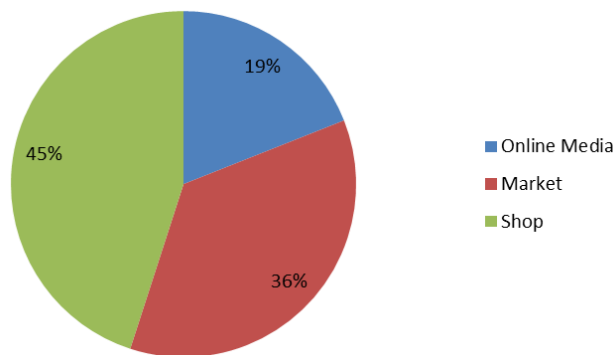
- Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on MSMEs
  - Factors causing the decline in MSME commodity marketing
  - Efficient marketing strategy for MSME commodity products
  - Evaluation of the results of the discussion assisted by a questionnaire.
- d) Evaluation of activity results.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the research conducted, it appears that there are 2 (two) important variables that can describe how MSME actors market their products during a pandemic. The two variables studied were related to public understanding during the pandemic in marketing MSME products, namely marketing through online media and the level of ability of MSME actors in using digital media. In the following, we will discuss one by one of the two variables mentioned above, so that it will be clear how the problems that occur in the marketing of MSME products can be used as evaluation material in the future.

#### 3.1. Marketing Through Online Media

Online media is a means to communicate online through websites and applications that can only be accessed via the internet (Nadzira et al., 2020; Hidayat, 2019; Herlambang, 2018). Contains text, sound, photos and videos. The definition of online media generally includes all types of websites and applications, including news sites, company sites, institutional/agencies sites, blogs, community forums, social media sales sites (e-commerce/online stores) and chat applications. During the Covid-19 pandemic, marketing of food products, agricultural products, handicrafts and others was widely sold through electronic social media. Digital marketing is a marketing practice that uses digital distribution channels to reach consumers in relevant, personal and cost-effective ways. Marketing activities will be carried out intensively using computer media, both from product offerings, payments, and delivery. During the Covid-19 pandemic, MSME actors need to increase their creativity in marketing their MSME products. However, there are still few and only a handful of MSME actors who market their products in online media. Based on the results in the field, there are still few MSME actors who market their products in online media, which is shown in Figure 1.



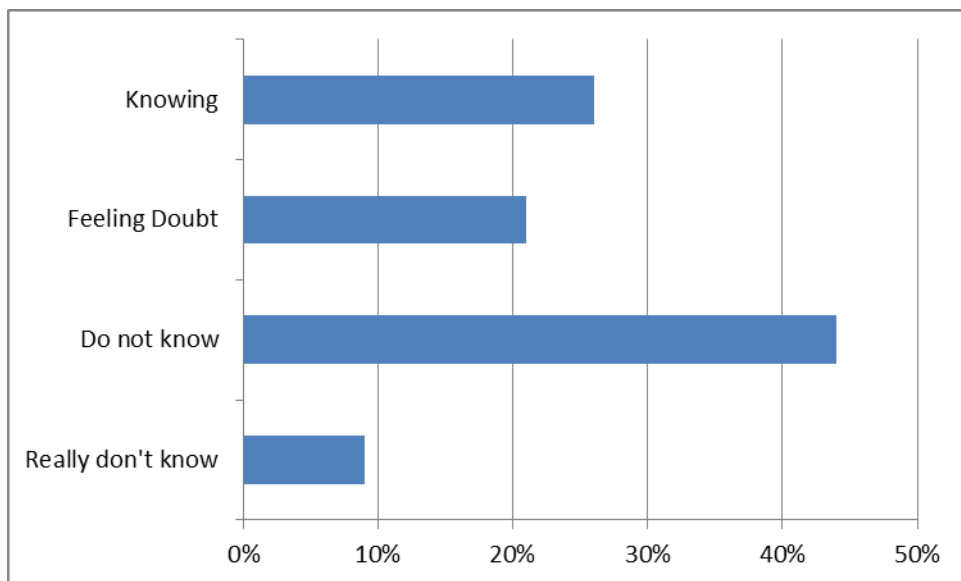
**Figure 1.** MSME product marketing places

Based on Figure 1, the majority of MSME business actors in Tasikmalaya Regency market their products in stores (45%), then 36% market their products in the market. The use of online media in marketing MSME products is still small at 19%. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the income level of MSMEs experienced a very significant decline. This is triggered because of restrictions on community activities causing shops and markets to experience a decrease in visitors. During the Covid-19 pandemic, consumer behavior began to shift, from the beginning consumers made direct purchases of goods to start using the Internet to buy various necessities (Ali, 2020). Online shopping is defined as the behavior of

visiting online stores via the Internet to search, bid, or view products to buy and obtain products (Warayanti and Suyanto, 2015; Musyifah and Simanjuntak, 2016). Online shopping occurs when customers choose the Internet to transact because many factors motivate customers to buy. Shopping through the Internet, buyers can preview the goods and services they want to spend on the web promoted by the seller without having to go directly to the shop or market where they bought it. Enough. This shopping activity is a new form of communication that does not require direct face-to-face communication. However, this can be done separately from and to the rest of the world through the media of Notebook, Computer, or Mobile which is connected to Internet service.

### 3.2. Level of Ability to Use Digital Technology

Digital literacy can be defined as the ability of an individual to be able to apply various skills on digital devices such as finding and using information, being able to think critically, creatively, and collaborate. The level of individual ability to use digital technology is also a problem for MSME actors. There is still a lack of understanding of digital actors in using digital media, causing MSME actors to not be able to market their products online. Based on data obtained from MSME actors, there are still many who do not understand the use of digital technology. The majority of MSME actors communicate using telephone or WhatsApp. The ability to use online media in marketing MSME commodity products such as using Facebook, Instagram, websites, blogs, online advertisements, and the like is still very small. Because understanding in using online media causes the majority of MSME business actors to market their products in stores or in the market. Based on the data obtained in the field, it is given in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Level of Ability to Use Digital Technology in Marketing MSME Products

Based on Figure 2, the level of ability to market MSME products using digital technology is still low, at 26%. Very ignorant in using digital technology that is 9%, and do not know 44%. For those who have doubts about their ability to use digital technology, 21%. The ability to use digital technology is influenced by the age factor. Where the majority of MSME actors are aged 45 years and over, not the younger generation. This situation causes a lack of understanding in using online media in marketing their products. The ability to use technology and the use of online media in marketing are interrelated. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the ability to use digital technology. In this online era, the ability to use online media is very important, because online marketing seems to be much more profitable than traditional marketing.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that training and assistance related to online marketing of MSME products needs to be carried out in a sustainable manner and implemented in all regions in Indonesia. This is because there is still a lack of public understanding in using digital technology in marketing MSME products. Based on the results obtained, the use of online media in marketing MSME products was 19%. From the results of the analysis, it is found that the level of ability to use digital technology is 26%, which means that there are still many MSME actors who do not understand using digital technology, especially in creating online stores. Therefore, continuous training and assistance is needed in improving the understanding of MSME actors and keeping up with the times.

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