



Strengthening the Competitive Advantage of Culinary MSMEs through Digital Coaching Clinics in SINPASA Market, Bandung

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Abstract

This community service program aims to enhance the digital competencies and strengthen the competitive advantage of culinary MSMEs located in the SINPASA Modern Market, Bandung, through an adaptive and contextual coaching clinic approach. A total of 40 MSMEs participated in a three-month program consisting of needs assessment, training, individual mentoring, and evaluation stages. Pre-test and post-test results demonstrated significant improvements across all measured aspects, particularly in digital promotion knowledge and competitive advantage understanding. The coaching clinic model, which integrates practical training and personalised mentoring, proved effective in improving participants' technical skills and fostering an open mindset towards digital transformation. This program not only resulted in higher competency levels but also encouraged the adoption of technology and sustainable development of competitive advantage based on local potential.

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1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a strategic role in national economic recovery, job creation, and strengthening local economies. Bandung City is one of Indonesia's creative economy hubs, with the culinary sector contributing over 40% of registered MSMEs. Over the last five years, this subsector has continued to grow, generating trillions of Rupiah annually. One concentration of culinary MSMEs is at SINPASA Modern Market, Summarecon Bandung, which houses 140 selected tenants, including 70 Bandung MSMEs, 46 from Dekranasda, and 24 under the local Trade and Industry Office.

Despite modern facilities and strategic location, many businesses still struggle to build a competitive advantage. This issue is more pressing with the rapid increase in culinary MSMEs from 8,884 units in 2022 to 10,976 units in 2024 (opendata.bandung.go.id), tightening local market competition. However, this growth is not yet matched by better performance, as product competitiveness and digital market penetration remain low. Therefore, strategic, adaptive, and collaborative interventions are needed. Without preparation, sellers may face declining consumer purchasing power and risk being left behind [1–3].

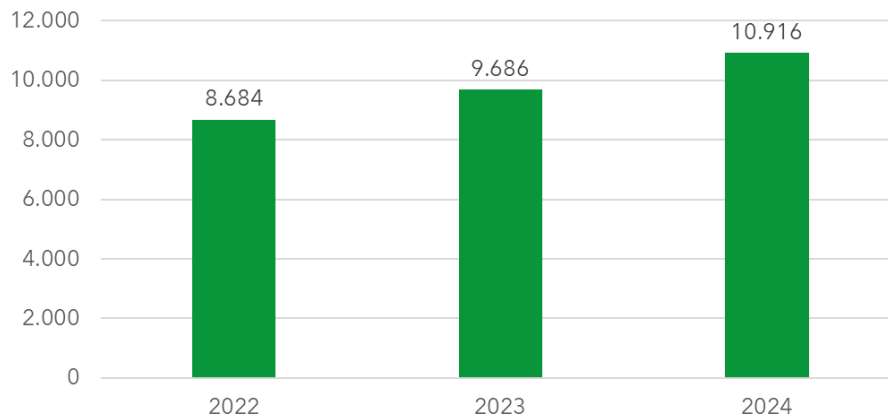


Figure 1. Number of Culinary MSMEs in Bandung City in 2022-2024

Source: Opendata.bandung.go.id

This structured community service program applies a coaching clinic model based on specific MSME needs and uses a participatory approach considering local socio-cultural contexts. Training and human resource development have proven to boost productivity and competitiveness sustainably [4–6]. Digital capability is crucial to drive innovation and resilience for small businesses in volatile markets and crises [7–9]. Digitalisation also expands market reach and operational efficiency [10–12]. In this program's context, entrepreneurial competence helps MSME owners use digital technology to enhance competitiveness [13–15].

This program acts as both a knowledge transfer and a cross-stakeholder collaboration forum, strengthening people-to-people diplomacy within international cooperation. It involves lecturers and students from Telkom University and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan as digital marketing resource persons, working with Gedebage Village Office, Dekranasda, SINTASA Market management, and Rancabolang Village's co-working space as community partners. This cross-sector collaboration ensures that the activities remain relevant to the target community's real needs. The main challenges at SINTASA include low digital competence and an underdeveloped competitive advantage for local culinary products. The unique feature of this program is its personal, contextual coaching clinic model, different from conventional mass training often used in MSME empowerment [16–18]. In the local culinary sector, a mentor-based approach is rarely applied systematically, yet it is vital to bridge digital competency gaps and differentiation strategies. The program aims to address local issues while strengthening the international collaborative model for community-based economic empowerment.

2. Methodology

Activity Design

This community service program was designed to be participatory and practical, using a coaching clinic approach based on the real needs of culinary MSME owners. The approach combines practical training and focused mentoring that adapts to each participant's specific challenges. This model ensures the learning process is two-way, personal, and responsive to field conditions. The activities include needs identification, digitalisation and competitive advantage training, individual coaching sessions, regular mentoring, and distribution of a practical guidebook. This strategy supports improving digital competence while fostering a transformative mindset to encourage MSMEs to adopt technology.

Location and Time

The program was held at SINTASA Modern Market, Summarecon Bandung, located at Jl. Bulevar Teknopolis No. 3, Gedebage District, Bandung City, West Java. This site was chosen as it is a hub for culinary MSME activities with great potential for digital transformation and product competitiveness.

Activities were conducted for three months, from September to November 2024, with a flexible schedule to accommodate participants and mentors, and main sessions held every weekend.

Target and Scope

The target group consisted of 40 active culinary MSMEs operating at SINPASA Modern Market. The scope included enhancing digital literacy, using cashless transaction technology (e.g., QRIS), optimising social media promotion, and exploring competitive advantage based on product characteristics and local identity. Participants were selected through observation, recommendations from market management, and their commitment to intensive training. The focus was not only on improving technical capacity but also on strengthening readiness for digital transformation.

Implementation Stages

Figure 2 presents the structured flow of activity implementation for the digital literacy coaching program targeted at culinary MSMEs at SINPASA Modern Market. The process begins with a situation and condition analysis involving key local stakeholders, including CWS Rancabolang, SINPASA management, and MSME representatives. A participant screening process follows this to ensure the selection of MSMEs that are genuinely in need and committed to digital transformation. The next stage involves conducting a workshop focused on digitalisation and building competitive advantage. Subsequent steps include a coaching clinic to address specific technical issues, assigning mentors to provide consistent support to each MSME, and distributing pocket guidebooks to offer ongoing practical guidance. This flow emphasises a participatory, needs-based approach aimed at ensuring the relevance, continuity, and impact of the program. Activities were carried out in six main stages (see **Figure 2**).

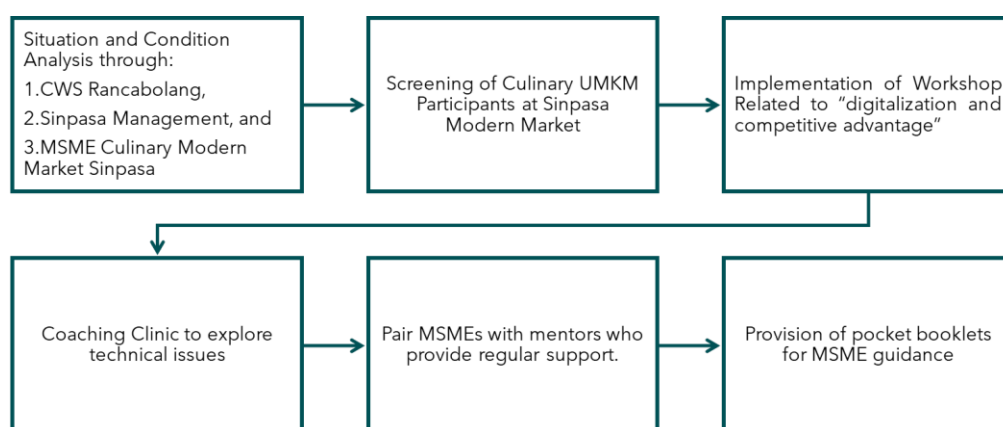


Figure 2: Activity Implementation Flow

Situation Analysis and Needs Mapping

The situation analysis and needs mapping phase was a critical foundation for designing a responsive and impactful program. It began with comprehensive field observations and preliminary surveys to gather baseline data on the operational conditions, digital readiness, and promotional practices of culinary MSMEs operating in the SINPASA Modern Market. These initial findings were then validated through short, semi-structured interviews with selected MSME owners, allowing the team to explore deeper contextual challenges, such as limited access to digital infrastructure, lack of digital literacy, low social media engagement, and weak differentiation strategies.

To enhance accuracy and relevance, the program team engaged in strategic coordination with key local stakeholders, including the market management and the Community Work Space (CWS) of Rancabolang. Their insights were instrumental in understanding the structural barriers and potential enablers within the local business ecosystem. These collaborations helped identify MSMEs that were not only in need of intervention but also demonstrated a strong willingness to commit to an intensive training and mentoring process.

The mapping results highlighted several recurring challenges: a heavy reliance on manual business operations, minimal usage of digital payment systems like QRIS, and a general lack of understanding of how to build a competitive advantage in a saturated market. Out of over 100 tenants, 40 MSMEs were carefully selected based on their urgency for support, openness to learning, and potential for digital transformation. This targeted selection ensured that program resources were optimally utilised and that participants were genuinely motivated to engage in the full cycle of training, mentoring, and implementation. Ultimately, this needs-driven approach strengthened the program's relevance and laid the groundwork for measurable improvement in digital competence and entrepreneurial performance.

Workshop Digitalisation and Competitive Advantage

The workshop on Digitalisation and Competitive Advantage served as a pivotal learning platform to introduce culinary MSME participants to essential digital tools and strategic business concepts. Delivered through face-to-face sessions using an interactive and participatory method, the workshop aimed to build a solid foundation in digital literacy while simultaneously fostering entrepreneurial insight. Key topics covered included the fundamentals of digital transformation for MSMEs, practical steps for adopting digital payment systems such as QRIS, and methods for leveraging social media platforms to enhance brand visibility and customer engagement.

In addition to theoretical knowledge, the workshop emphasised strategies for building competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving market landscape. Participants were introduced to concepts such as value proposition development, market positioning, and product differentiation. These concepts were contextualised with real-world case studies from successful local and regional entrepreneurs who had effectively transformed their businesses through digital adoption. Such case studies served not only as motivational examples but also as practical references for replicable strategies.

Furthermore, the workshop incorporated active discussions, live demonstrations, and small group exercises to ensure comprehension and encourage immediate application. Participants were invited to share their business challenges and explore potential digital solutions with guidance from facilitators. This interactive environment fostered peer learning and strengthened participants' confidence in experimenting with new tools and ideas. Overall, the workshop laid the groundwork for the subsequent coaching clinic and mentoring stages, equipping MSMEs with the necessary mindset and initial skills to embark on their digital transformation journey.

Coaching Clinic Execution & Mentoring

The coaching clinic and mentoring sessions represented the most personalised and impactful component of the program, designed to address the unique challenges faced by each MSME participant. These sessions moved beyond generic training by focusing on the technical, operational, and strategic issues specific to each business. Topics commonly addressed included the practical use of digital tools (such as QRIS activation and mobile inventory apps), content planning for digital marketing, customer engagement through social media, basic financial tracking, and strategies for improving business management. To ensure meaningful guidance, each MSME was paired with a dedicated mentor, comprising lecturers and trained students from Telkom University. This mentor-mentee model facilitated consistent and context-specific support, allowing the learning process to evolve according to the participant's pace and readiness. The mentoring took place through both in-person field visits at the MSME kiosks and flexible online sessions, offering continuity and convenience, especially for participants with limited time or mobility.

What distinguished this coaching approach was its adaptability and responsiveness to real-time issues. For example, mentors often helped troubleshoot technical problems on the spot, assisted in setting up digital business accounts, and offered feedback on product photos and online content. In many cases, the mentoring process also included soft-skill development such as customer communication and digital etiquette. Regular interaction between mentors and MSMEs fostered trust and accountability, creating a collaborative atmosphere where participants felt supported in experimenting with new tools and techniques. This hands-on, needs-based coaching model not only accelerated digital adoption but also helped cultivate a growth-oriented mindset—essential for sustaining innovation and competitive advantage in the long term.

Guidebook Distribution and Final Evaluation

To ensure the sustainability of knowledge and practices introduced during the program, each MSME participant received a pocket-sized guidebook designed as a practical reference tool. The guidebook contained concise, easy-to-follow instructions on essential topics such as digital payment setup, social media marketing strategies, content planning, customer engagement, and methods to identify and strengthen a business's competitive advantage. The material was tailored to the local context, using real examples and language accessible to MSME owners with varying levels of education and digital literacy. This guidebook served as a key resource to reinforce learning beyond the training sessions and allowed participants to revisit best practices at their own pace.

In addition to the distribution of learning materials, a comprehensive program evaluation was conducted to measure impact and identify areas for improvement. This evaluation included both quantitative and qualitative methods. Pre-test and post-test surveys were used to assess knowledge acquisition and skill development across five core parameters: digital literacy, use of digital technology, promotion techniques, competitive advantage understanding, and product development. The improvement observed between the two assessments provided concrete evidence of learning outcomes.

Furthermore, mentors contributed structured observation notes during the mentoring period, recording behavioural changes, levels of engagement, and the degree of digital tool adoption by each participant. These qualitative insights added depth to the evaluation, highlighting not only what participants learned but how they applied it in their business operations. This dual-layered evaluation process not only validated the effectiveness of the program but also provided a roadmap for scaling and refining future interventions. Ultimately, the combination of guidebook distribution and thorough evaluation ensured that the impact of the program would extend beyond its three-month implementation, supporting long-term digital transformation among MSMEs.

Tools and Materials

The successful implementation of the digital literacy coaching clinic program was supported by a range of tools and materials that facilitated practical training, mentoring, documentation, and evaluation. Essential equipment included laptops and projectors for delivering interactive workshop presentations, along with stable internet connections to support real-time demonstrations of digital platforms such as QRIS, social media apps, and online marketplaces. To document activities and capture learning progress, cameras and audio recorders were used during sessions, mentoring visits, and interviews with participants. For data collection and impact measurement, the team utilised both digital and printed survey tools, such as Google Forms and hardcopy questionnaires, which allowed flexible responses from participants depending on their access to devices. These tools enabled the collection of pre-test and post-test data, feedback, and mentoring reflections in a structured and consistent manner.

In terms of educational materials, the program provided comprehensive training modules that covered digitalisation, business strategy, and competitive advantage. To support the coaching sessions, coaching worksheets were developed to guide mentors in structuring discussions, tracking participant progress, and addressing specific business challenges. Mentor observation guidelines helped ensure uniformity in monitoring behavioural changes and levels of engagement across all MSMEs. Lastly, the pocket-sized MSME guidebook played a crucial role in supporting participants beyond the training period, offering them a practical, easy-to-use reference for applying what they had learned. Overall, the careful selection and integration of tools and materials ensured the program was not only well-organised and interactive but also accessible and sustainable for the diverse needs of MSME participants.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation used quantitative and qualitative methods. Pre-test and post-test surveys measured improvements in digital competence, including QRIS use, digital promotion, and business planning. Mentor observations during mentoring assessed behavioural change and technology adoption readiness. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) identified changes in mindset, attitudes towards innovation, and participants' perceptions of the program's effectiveness. All evaluation results were used as a basis for program improvement and further training module development.

3. Result & Discussion

Implementation of the Digital Literacy Coaching Clinic Program

The three-month digital literacy coaching clinic program (September–November 2024) at SINPASA Modern Market showed measurable changes at the individual, business group, and market ecosystem levels. Forty culinary MSME owners participated in thematic workshops, weekly mentoring, and kiosk troubleshooting sessions. The entire process was documented through photos, mentor observation sheets, and screen captures of the digital tools used by participants.

1. Competency and Behaviour Change

Pre-test and post-test assessments using a five-point Likert scale showed knowledge gains across five main parameters (**Table 1**). Field observations indicated that 19 tenants began routinely uploading products to online marketplaces, 22 activated QRIS, and 11 shifted to simple mobile inventory apps. This demonstrates a positive shift in attitude towards technology use and a readiness to experiment with new sales channels.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Results for Participants' Basic Competence

No	Parameter	Pretest	Posttest	Improvement
1	Digital literacy knowledge	Fair	Good	Increased by one level
2	Understanding of competitive advantage	Fair	Very Good	Increased by two levels
3	Knowledge of digital promotion	Bad	Good	Increased by two levels
4	Knowledge of digital technology use	Good	Very Good	Increased by one level
5	Product development knowledge	Fair	Good	Increased by one level

The evaluation showed significant knowledge improvements across all measured aspects, including digital literacy, understanding competitive advantage, digital promotion, technology use, and product development. Overall, scores shifted from bad and fair to good and very good. The most significant gain was in digital promotion skills, moving from bad to good, reflecting the effectiveness of training on social media and digital content strategies. Participants' understanding of competitive advantage also improved from fair to very good, showing better awareness of product differentiation and positioning. Other parameters, such as digital literacy and product development, improved from fair to good, while technology use increased from good to very good, indicating that even participants familiar with technology deepened their capabilities. Overall, this shows that the personalised, contextual coaching clinic approach met real MSME needs, shaping technical understanding and new awareness of innovation and competitiveness in a digital context.

2. Short-Term Economic Contribution

Within two months, 18 tenants reported average revenue growth of 14–18%, mainly from online orders. QRIS transactions averaged 9–12 payments per day, reducing cashier queues by about 30 seconds per transaction and minimising cash counting errors. Mentors noted a reduction in manual recording; 75% of tenants now prepare monthly content plans and schedule social media uploads. Discussions also showed that participants began forming peer-sharing networks, indicating early social change supporting digital transformation sustainability. Customer satisfaction increased, with buyers sharing positive testimonials on social media, highlighting convenience with digital payments and faster responses, fostering loyalty and repeat purchases.

3. Workshop and Coaching Clinic Execution

To ensure the training and coaching clinic was systematic and measurable, the team designed an experiential learning cycle with five stages. Each stage aimed not just to deliver material but also to enable active learning and track success accurately. This process combined experiential learning with data-driven evaluation. **Table 2** summarises the structured mechanism, from initial competency

measurement to delivery, practice simulations, and final evaluation of results and participant satisfaction. Supporting documentation is shown in the figures provided.

Table 2. Digital Literacy Training and Workshop Mechanism for MSMEs

Mechanism	Description
Pre-test	1) Measures initial participant knowledge. 2) Serves as a baseline indicator of training effectiveness.
Delivery	Presentation of cross-border e-commerce material.
Coaching Clinic	Participants discussed and practised using digital technology, including QRIS and digital promotion.
Post-test	Compares knowledge improvement after training.
Final Evaluation	A questionnaire to gather feedback on training satisfaction and relevance.

Table 2 outlines the systematic mechanism applied in the digital literacy training program for culinary MSMEs at SINPASA Modern Market, Bandung. Each stage was designed to ensure a participatory and measurable learning process. The pre-test phase served to assess participants' initial knowledge and acted as a baseline indicator of training effectiveness. The delivery stage involved interactive presentations on cross-border e-commerce materials tailored to MSME needs. The coaching clinic was the program's core, where participants actively engaged in discussions and hands-on practice using digital tools such as QRIS and digital promotion strategies, supported by mentors from faculty and student teams. The post-test was conducted to measure knowledge improvement after the training, which showed significant gains in digital literacy, understanding of competitive advantage, and digital marketing skills. The final evaluation involved a questionnaire to collect participant feedback on training satisfaction and relevance. Overall, the results demonstrated the effectiveness of a contextual and adaptive coaching clinic approach in addressing the real needs of MSMEs.

Figure 4 captures the vibrant and collaborative atmosphere of the workshop program activity conducted at SINPASA Modern Market, Bandung. The photo showcases the active participation of culinary MSME owners, student mentors, lecturers from Telkom University and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, and local stakeholders involved in the international community service initiative. This group photo, taken at the end of a workshop session, reflects the inclusive and participatory nature of the program. It highlights the strong engagement and enthusiasm of participants, symbolising cross-cultural collaboration, shared learning, and community empowerment through digital literacy enhancement and entrepreneurship training.



Figure 4. Workshop Program Activity

Figure 5 illustrates a symbolic moment during the certificate handover ceremony, marking the official recognition of contributions made in the international community service program. The handover was conducted by the Head of Gedebage Sub-district and received by a representative from Telkom

University, accompanied by lecturers from Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and representatives from SEMPASA Market management. This gesture highlights the collaborative spirit between academic institutions and local government in supporting MSME empowerment. The event not only acknowledged the successful implementation of the program but also strengthened institutional partnerships and affirmed the importance of joint efforts in fostering inclusive digital and entrepreneurial growth.



Figure 5. Certificate Handover by Gedebage Sub-district Head with Telkom University and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan Lecturers and SEMPASA Management

Figure 6 highlights the training delivery sessions conducted for culinary MSME participants at SEMPASA Modern Market. The image on the left shows an interactive classroom-style session where a facilitator engages participants in discussions on digital marketing and competitive strategies, using visual aids and real-life examples to enhance understanding. The image on the right captures a group photo taken after the training session, reflecting the participants' enthusiasm and sense of community. These sessions were central to the program's objective of strengthening digital competencies, providing participants with practical knowledge and motivation to adopt digital tools for business growth. The positive and collaborative atmosphere evident in the images underscores the success of the participatory and context-driven training approach.



Figure 6. Training Delivery to Culinary MSME Participants

Figure 7 depicts the MSME kiosk visits and coaching clinic activities conducted as part of the digital literacy program at SEMPASA Modern Market. The images show mentors interacting directly with MSME owners at their kiosks, providing hands-on guidance on implementing digital tools, such as QRIS for cashless transactions and strategies for improving product presentation. These field visits allowed participants to receive tailored advice based on their specific business challenges, fostering a

practical and solution-oriented learning environment. The informal and collaborative setting, as captured in the photos, highlights the program's focus on building trust and encouraging active participation, ensuring that the knowledge shared during workshops can be effectively applied in real business operations.



Figure 7. MSME Kiosk Visits and Coaching Clinic Activities

Through a systematic, participatory structure, this community service program aims not only to enhance technical knowledge but also to shape new mindsets and habits aligned with digitalisation demands in the micro and small business ecosystem. Beyond knowledge transfer, this approach encourages gradual behaviour change, increasing awareness of digital technology and social media use. Thus, the program produces not just output in higher post-test scores but also outcomes in transformed work patterns and readiness for technology adoption.

The novelty of this research lies in its adaptive and contextual coaching clinic model, specifically tailored to the real needs of culinary MSMEs in the SINPASA Modern Market, Bandung. Unlike conventional one-size-fits-all training approaches, this program integrates personalised mentoring, practical field visits, and digital technology adoption strategies that are directly applicable to participants' businesses. The incorporation of cross-border academic collaboration between Telkom University and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan adds further value, enhancing both the content and delivery of the training. Moreover, the use of pre-test and post-test assessments, combined with direct observation and mentoring documentation, offers a comprehensive evaluation framework that ensures measurable impact. This approach not only enhances digital literacy and competitive awareness but also promotes mindset transformation, readiness for innovation, and sustainable local economic empowerment, elements that are rarely emphasised together in previous community service models for MSMEs.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the training and mentoring program through a coaching clinic approach for culinary MSME owners at SINPASA Modern Market has proven to have a positive impact on improving participants' competencies, especially in digitalisation and strengthening competitive advantage. All measured parameters showed increased knowledge levels, including digital literacy, technology use, digital promotion, product development, and differentiation strategies.

The most significant improvements occurred in digital promotion and understanding competitive advantage, which were initially low but rose to good and excellent categories after the intervention. This indicates that an adaptive, responsive, and needs-based learning method is highly effective in addressing MSMEs' real challenges. Furthermore, this activity not only impacted technical aspects but also encouraged participants to shift their mindsets to be more open to digital transformation and business innovation. Thus, the program succeeded in achieving its goal of preparing MSMEs to adapt in the digital era while sustainably strengthening local potential-based business competitiveness.

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