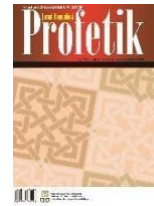




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## Digital Economic Literacy: Elevating Culinary Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with Digital Branding

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### ABSTRACT

Digital Economy Literacy is necessary for business people, but there is still a need for more information about technology, making it difficult for MSMEs to switch to digital business. Four factors make it difficult for MSMEs to go digital. MSMEs in the culinary field in these locations still do not master packaging, branding, marketing techniques, and internet technology, a prerequisite for online marketing. This study aims to see how MSMEs have digital economy literacy in that location. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach where researchers directly help the community through empowerment or service. Researchers carried out data collection techniques through observation and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The results of this study are that MSME actors in the culinary field can carry out digital branding and online marketing techniques as a result of empowerment or community service by researchers, including 1) understanding digital tools that are considered the most accessible by MSME actors; 2) the assistance needed by MSMEs in digital appeals; and 3) the digital literacy level of MSMEs seen from the digital literacy competency model.



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## INTRODUCTION

The role of micro and small businesses in the growth and development of the Indonesian economy plays a very important role in the country's economic growth. Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are informal business entities whose existence is important as a support for economic development and the scope of community efforts to improve their welfare (Ayalu, Abbay, & Azadi, 2023). Digital technology can play an important role in alleviating poverty and inequality by enabling access to economic opportunities (Ali, Raza, & Qazi, 2023). Even though marketing SME products via social media effectively reaches the target market (Suryono & Indri Astuti, 2013),. Digital signage, online advertising, and social media promotions are effective strategies to reach target audiences and increase brand awareness (Putri & Irwansyah, 2020). However, currently, there is still a lack of digital literacy that can be understood by business owners.

Digital literacy is important not only for Internet adoption but also for finding information effectively in the digital space. Evidence from developing countries suggests that they provide access to valuable information about markets, employment, health, education, and financial services but

are dependent on complementary investments (Castanha et al., 2022). Digital literacy has a positive impact on entrepreneurial attitudes and the creative economy (Wardana et al., 2023). Digital competence, information management, and responsible use of the Internet are still low for small enterprises (5 million) (4.74%), and medium enterprises employ 3.73 million people (3.11%), while large enterprises employ around 3.58 million people. This means that combined MSMEs absorb around 97% of the national workforce, while large enterprises only absorb around 3% of the total national workforce (Kemenkopukm, 2022).

SME actors in the Banjarsari sub-district also face similar problems, especially in the Mangkubumen sub-district, which is the location of this community partnership program (PKM). Banjarsari sub-district is a sub-district located in the center of Surakarta city. This sub-district is the largest in Surakarta. The area of the district is 14.81 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 157,438 people spread across 13 sub-districts (Disadmindukcapil, 2019). Accumulatively, according to data from the Surakarta City Cooperatives and UKM Office (2016), the number of SMEs per district in Surakarta is as follows:



Table 1. Number of MSMEs in Surakarta City per District in 2016

Business Sector	Subdistrict					Amount
	Banjarsari	Jebres	Laweyan	Pasar Kliwon	Serengan	
Agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries	14	8	26	38	21	107
Mining and excavation	2	0	1	0	0	3
Management Industry	1.162	1689	760	1538	1105	6254
Electricity, Gas, and Clean Water	36	53	26	95	10	220
Construction	26	12	15	9	3	70
Trade, Hotels and Restaurants	7.677	7.127	6337	6821	3329	31281
Transport and Communication	124	137	61	42	22	397
Finance, leasing, and corporate services	475	336	300	176	150	1437
Private services	856	789	646	477	251	3109
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.372</b>	<b>10156</b>	<b>8162</b>	<b>9196</b>	<b>4902</b>	<b>42788</b>

Source: Surakarta City Cooperatives and UMKM Service

In the Banjarsari sub-district, one of the sub-districts that has many MSMEs and is currently developing is the Mangkubumen sub-district. They formed a group called UKM Mpok Sinah Klamben, which is located in Gedung Sasana Krida, Mangkubumen village. Mpok Sinah Klamben stands for the Arts and Small and Medium Enterprises Group of the Mangkubumen Village. From observations and media, both for promotions and transactions.

According to observations and interviews with MSME groups in the Mangkubumen sub-district area, there is a need for relevant training and assistance to strengthen MSME capacity, especially in accessing digital technology. With the ability to go online, it is hoped that MSME sales turnover will increase so that their welfare will also increase. With the potential the economy is changing from owning economy to sharing economy and from product-based to platform-based; 3) new technology-based jobs emerge;

4) demands to continue learning to adapt; a diploma is not enough. 5) data and information become an important basis for the economy and competition.

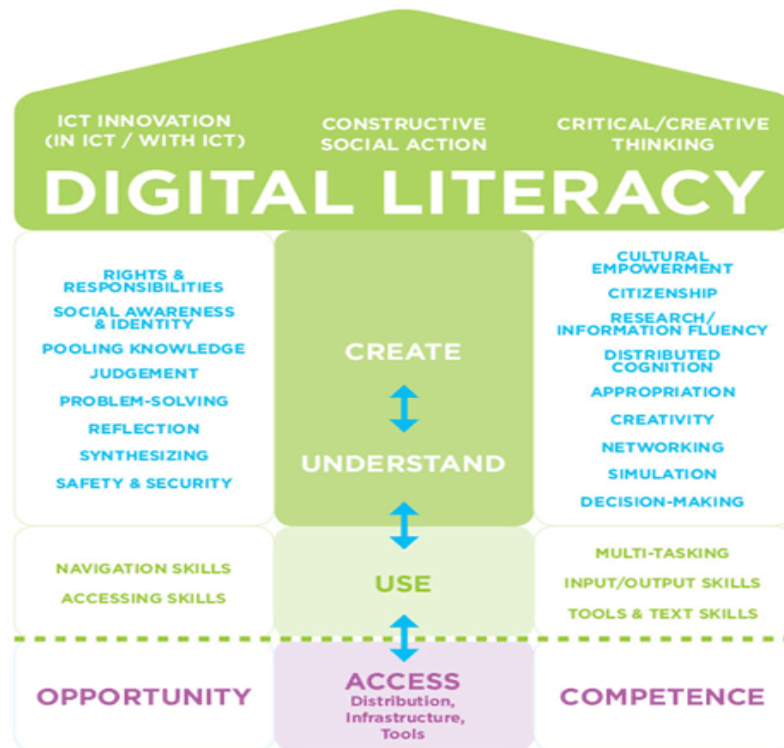
The use of E-commerce is a marketing solution and expansion of market access for the MSME business world. Mc Kinsey (2019) mentions the main factors that show that e-commerce in Indonesia is growing rapidly and is a capital for the growth of the e-commerce ecosystem, namely: a) the participation of MSMEs in buying and selling online; b) the market for gadget users; c) government policy; d) investment growth; e) digital consumers who are smart or digitally savvy (Adiningsih, 2019).

Many definitions and models explain what digital literacy is. Mediasmarts (2017), a Canada-based think tank, describes a digital literacy model with many interrelated elements ranging from basic access, awareness, and training to inform citizens and

build consumer and user trust to highly sophisticated and creative literacy and outcomes as well as critical. There is a logical progression from more basic skills to higher, more transformative levels, but doing so is not always a sequential process; it often depends

on the needs of the individual user. Digital literacy competencies can be classified according to three main principles; use, understand, and create as describe in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Digital Literacy



Source: Mediasmarts (2017)

To involve, contextualize, and critically evaluate digital media so that we can make informed decisions about what we do and encounter online. These are important skills we need to start teaching our kids once they go online. The government is currently supporting the digital literacy movement, particularly through the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia. This movement is not only aimed at people in big cities but aims to reach all corners of the archipelago. Being aware of how network technologies influence our actions and how we view. Understanding also prepares us for the knowledge economy

as we develop, individually and collectively, the information management skills to discover, evaluate, and effectively use the information to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems, understand, and experience the world is a key aspect of comprehension.

While creating is at the same time the ability to produce content and communicate effectively through various digital media tools,. Creating with digital media is much more than knowing how to use a word processor or composean email; it includes the ability to adapt what is produced for various contexts and audiences and to engage effectively and responsibly with Web 2.0 user-generated content such as blogs and discussion forums, video and photo sharing, social games, and other forms of social media.

In developing the MSME business, the brand itself has a very important role because customers will tend to choose products from more well-known brands. Strengthening branding is carried out through a brand development model that consists of five stages (Morgan & Pritchard, 2004), namely: 1) market investigation, analysis, and strategic recommendations; 2) development of brand identity; 3) brand launch; 4) brand implementation; and 5) monitoring and evaluation. While referring to the 5-Sources Model approach from Davis, Piven, & Breazeale (2014) brand digital must be able to fulfill the five functions as follows:

- a) Functional: How the brand can meet consumer expectations; How to involve the community in value creation
- b) Emotional: how the brand can represent the feelings and emotions of consumers and their communities.
- c) Self: Is the brand important for the consumer's self-image? The brand can connect with society.
- d) Personal: how the brand builds social relationships with consumers, including friends and family.
- e) Relational: What is the role of the brand in the relational community, and what values are involved, including the stakeholder.

In developing brand identity, the brand name is the basis for customer awareness of the brand and the company's communication efforts toward the brand (Handayani & Desi, 2010). In order to be accepted by the market, brand name determination must meet the following criteria:

- a) Is the name easy to learn? (attractive, symbolizes a certain image; deep meaning, emotional side; simple)
- b) Does the name reflect the product class?

- c) Does the name support a symbol or slogan?
- d) Does the name support the desired brand association?
- e) What are the unwanted associations?
- f) Is the name unique?
- g) Is the name legally valid?

Furthermore, to be successful in using social media, MSMEs must start by getting more conversions, such as followers, subscribers, and the like. Before getting more people to know about a business (traffic), a relationship (conversion) is needed with customers or potential customers. The more followers an account has, the higher the engagement. Mulyono & Syamsuri (2023) mention three principles for creating content on social media, namely: a) focus on the business industry being worked on; b) answer visitors' questions and make them interested in seeing more content; c) build communication with customers and potential customers.

More technically, the MSME branding design in this community partnership program considers various digital platforms as marketing media by taking into account the following aspects:

- a) Designing a brand identity starts with the logo design and choosing the dominant color for the tagline for the brand being carried. The aim is to make it easier for the public to remember and understand the message to be conveyed about the product or service offering being carried.
- b) Choose the most appropriate tool for the marketing process. This selection must be triggered by the needs and types of products to be marketed.
- c) Design content to be used for marketing. Content in this case includes various aspects, such as written content and audio-visual content.



- d) In determining which social media will be maximized in marketing, business people need to consider many things, one of which is the target consumer and the use of social media itself.

While the objectives and expected benefits of this activity are as follows:

- a) Increased understanding of the benefits of using digital technology to develop businesses for MSMEs in Mangkubumen Village.
- b) Increased understanding of branding and marketing, especially by using digital media for MSMEs in Mangkubumen Village.
- c) Increased skills in preparing clear and sustainable business plans and branding strategies for MSMEs in Mangkubumen Village.
- d) Increasing collaboration between MSMEs in Mangkubumen Village in utilizing digital technology.
- e) Increase the number of MSMEs that go online in Mangkubumen Village.
- f) Increasing sales turnover of MSMEs that go online in Mangkubumen Village.

The economic literacy of entrepreneurs is still low. This is a result of the insignificant influence of knowledge economics on the digitization of small and medium enterprises. Based on research findings, economic knowledge positively but not significantly, affects digitalization. Compared to companies, small and medium enterprises not only lack resources and limited market influence but also lack knowledge and skills (Stankovska, Josimovski, & Edwards, 2016).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method used by researchers is a qualitative descriptive method with a participatory action research (PAR)

approach that must fulfill the element of empowerment. The researcher solved this problem using participatory assistance related to the problem of digital branding and the marketing capacity of go-online micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Mangkubumen Village. Previously, problem identification was carried out using a limited focus group discussion (FGD) with the target group. The PKM approach to participatory action research (PAR) is an approach whose process aims at learning to overcome problems and meet the practical needs of the community, as well as knowledge production (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009).

The main target of this activity is the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) group in Mangkubumen Village, especially those belonging to the Mpok Sinah Klamben MSME group, which will collaboratively be involved in the following activities:

- a) Initial socialization is a step to carry out the coordination of activities and re-identification if there is a change in target data and conditions.
- b) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) aims to identify problems and needs for strengthening Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Mangkubumen Village to go online and digitally.
- c) Planning and synchronization of training and mentoring.
- d) Digital Branding and Marketing Training for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Mangkubumen Village.
- e) Simulation of Making Digital Branding for MSMEs in Mangkubumen Village.
- f) Dissemination of MSME readiness to go online to the wider community.
- g) Final evaluation of the program by way of observation and question and answer.



All data is collected through observation and focus group discussion so that the data obtained is in-depth and follows the solutions to community problems. This empowerment-oriented Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach must fulfill the elements of empowerment. As for empowerment, it must always seek three dimensions at once: meeting needs and solving practical problems, developing knowledge and community diversity, and the process of social change in diversity. The next strategy is to build a strategic economic network that functions to develop cooperation in overcoming limitations in the fields of production, marketing, technology, and capital.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Digital Economy Literacy (MSME)

Advances in digital technology have brought many benefits to human life because they can transcend the boundaries of space and time, where all spaces are closed without partitions, so it seems that there are no barriers between one place and another. Online delivery services, online buying and selling, distance learning, digital business through various platforms and markets, etc. are proof of how great the benefits of advances in digital technology are in all aspects of human life.

Economic literacy is important for small and medium businesses, and corporate entrepreneurs, especially when it is related to the digital world, as an increase in one's economic literacy contributes to society or the country (Yayar & Eker Karaca, 2017). The initial step of this service activity is to coordinate with MSME actors in the Mangkubumen sub-district, especially those who trade in Sasosono Krido. According to the UMKM coordinator, MSME activities have been going on for about the last year and consist of 15 culinary traders with types of business including Ice Calmer, Fresh Milk, Grilled Bread, Egg Sausage,

Timlo, Lontong Opor, Soto, Siomay and Wedangan, Thai Tea, Roasted Corn, and Liwet Rice. Small and medium enterprises may have more opportunities to grow when economic literacy is combined with the digital economy (Consoli, 2012; Tarute, Nikou, & Gatautis, 2017). Food businesses must implement perceived ease of use and maximize digital economy literacy so that they can improve business performance. Literacy in the digital economy is one of the right strategies for encouraging MSMEs in the digital economy era (Erlanitasari, Rahmanto, & Wijaya, 2019).

The lack of ability for MSMEs to utilize digital technology in marketing products and services is a challenge for MSMEs. With as many as 64.2 million MSMEs, it turns out that around 36% of national MSMEs still use conventional marketing methods, and 18% of MSMEs use social media and websites for product promotion. As many as 37% of MSMEs are only able to operate computers and the internet; also, 29.18% of MSMEs on the island of Java and 16.6% of MSMEs outside Java have utilized digital marketing (Setkab, 2021).

Based on the results of focus group discussions with traders, they stated that so far, their understanding and access have been very limited regarding digital marketing. The majority of traders have smartphones but have not used tools such as websites, blogs, social media accounts, brand identity (logo, company profile), or online footprints (reviews and feedback from customers). Digitalization can create efficiency, innovation, business growth, and competitive advantage (Faller & Feldmüller, 2015; Tarute et al., 2017). Economics education enables one to make better decisions by considering costs and benefits. Therefore, economic education is very important for both individuals and society (Mathieson et al., 2015). Digital economic literacy provides various benefits to everyday consumer behavior.



Economic literacy is considered to have a positive influence on carrying out daily economic activities. In addition, an understanding of economic literacy will provide so many references for carrying out consumption and production activities.

Digital literacy is very important in the Industrial Age 4.0 because mastery of information technology is an important part of cultural, economic, political, and social change. Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, which requires cognitive and technical skills.

Digital economy literacy is the ability to use economic information by utilizing information technology. There are four aspects: a). the ability to recognize when information is needed; b). the ability to find the necessary information files; c). the ability to evaluate the suitability of the information obtained; and d). the ability to use the required information effectively and appropriately (Supriadi, Desmintari, Resti, & Siregar, 2021). The ability to read and interpret digital text due to technological advances has changed the operational scope of digital economic literacy (Erstad, 2006). According to Pool (1997), mastery of ideas on the digital internet has become a trend for daily activities. Simultaneously, according to Lennon et al. (2007), individual interests, attitudes, and abilities to use digital technology and communication tools properly in accessing, managing, integrating, and evaluating information as new knowledge in the process of communicating with others actively participating effectively.

Digitalization empowers entrepreneurs to quickly and effectively communicate with customers and suppliers (Verhoef et al., 2021). Recently, technology has allowed customers and suppliers to inquire and complain to

employers to maintain customer trust and satisfaction (Verhoef et al., 2021). Small and medium enterprises must increase their business with networks aimed at expanding business opportunities, maintaining positive relationships, and maintaining long-term relationships (Surya et al., 2021). Moreover, it is a fact that technology helps companies innovate and find new markets (Eliakis, Kotsopoulos, Pramadari, & Karagiannaki, 2020).

Economic literacy is a condition that shows how a person can understand economic problems correctly so that he can implement economic activities properly (Angra Melina, 2018). Economic literacy is a condition that shows how a person can understand economic problems properly so that he can implement economic activities properly. Economic literacy is something that must be studied first, because this is not something that will appear by itself because it requires a fairly long process, starting with the family and surrounding environment (Jannah, Mappatempo, & Haanurat, 2019). The rapid development of technology has brought a new revolution to the world of trade, where digitalization in the trade sector is also developing.

The active digitization of small and medium enterprises supports business activities that increase efficiency, make it easier for entrepreneurs to reach customers, and make it easier for them to get direct feedback (Bouwman, Nikou, & de Reuver, 2019). Based on the results of the discussions that have been carried out, traders prefer to use the Go-Food platform as the first step to be able to do digital marketing. The Go-Food platform was chosen because most culinary traders in this location are novice traders and access to digital tools is limited. This choice is understandable because the application does not require regular content updates compared to when traders use other digital tools such as social media. As stated by





the community manager informant, “Compared to other media, I think the Go Food application is more practical for small traders like friends here. If we use Go Food, we only need to update a little content; just take a photo of the product at the beginning. That's why, for SME's their energy and skills are limited when it comes to updates, like on social media. Some people have used Facebook or Instagram in the past but needed to be more careful about updating their content.” (FGD, Manager of Mpok Sinah Klamben, August 2019).

With limited digital literacy, Go-Food requirements are a practical first step for local merchants. This was acknowledged by one of the traders, who admitted that he already had a desire but did not know the procedure. When viewed from the Mediasmarts digital literacy model, the literacy of MSMEs in this partnership activity is still in the stage of using digital devices, and even then it is still very minimal, so continuous education is needed so that they can have more comprehensive digitization literacy.

Following up on the results of discussions with MSME actors, assistance was then carried out by inviting Go-Food representatives from Solo to provide explanations regarding registration procedures. From the results of the explanation, they were very enthusiastic about following and interested in joining. In addition, the identification found that the assisted MSMEs also did not understand branding, both conventionally and digitally. Most of them use made-up brand names and logos. As stated by the community manager informant, One of the main problems is that they need a better brand and packaging. Most of them still focus on production according to their capabilities. Likewise, access to digital still needs to be improved. In the past, we have tried to facilitate but have yet to succeed with Gojek. We hope this program can open access; we will be very happy.” (FGD,

Manager of Mpok Sinah Klamben, August 2019).

To follow up on the display requirements that will appear on the go food application, the team recommends the next step is to assist MSMEs in accessing the Go-food platform by guiding administrative requirements and helping to strengthen brand identity (logo and product names), packaging, and displaying more attractive photos of food products (food photography). According to the requirements for registration procedures, MSMEs need to prepare a Go-food application header photo with a resolution of 1000x500 or a 1:2 ratio (landscape) and a photo of each menu with a resolution of 500x500.

### **Transformation Digital Branding MSME**

Improving the performance of MSMEs, including focusing on digital technology, is very important (Latifah & Soewarno, 2023). Digital transformation and financial literacy have a positive effect on entrepreneurial performance (Li, Wang, & Soh, 2024). Adaptation and transformation are the keys to success for SMEs to survive, develop, and prosper in the digital era, especially when the business and market environment changes rapidly. SMEs take advantage of the possibilities of digitalization technology (Fechtelpeter, Ebbesmeyer, & Dumitrescu, 2017). Currently, companies also use e-commerce and digital marketing, which will become the main needs of consumers when transacting online on various e-commerce platforms, requiring MSMEs to be able to adapt to it. Some of the problems are One of the challenges faced by MSMEs when making changes is the lack of information and the ability of MSMEs to use digital technology to market their products and other activities (Oktaviani & Rustandi, 2018). Technological developments and the characteristics of the digital industry today, which are increasingly developing, need to



be adjusted to market needs (Noveriyanto & Adawiyah, 2021).

According to Garzoni et al. (2020), digital technologies often affect most companies at different scales and even beyond their borders, influencing their products, business processes, distribution channels, and supply chains to create sustainable competitive advantages (Matt, Hess, & Benlian, 2015). Digital business transformation is an objective process that responds to changes in the business environment. Digital transformation is the use of digital technology (Morze & Strutynska, 2021), one of the most important factors in productivity and corporate values (Westerman, Bonnet, & McAfee, 2014). Business context and needs (Reis, Amorim, Melão, & Matos, 2018).

The application of digital marketing as a marketing and branding strategy, which includes the use of SEO, Adwords, and ads, is one of the solutions in the marketing and branding process so that it is more optimal and can develop the business potential of these MSMEs. Running a business or company certainly requires a role. Marketing so that the products sold are known to the wider community. Now the competition between companies is very tight, so marketing strategies are always used by business actors to gain a competitive advantage over various potential competitors. In addition, marketing can also promote a business that is built and increase company profits.

Digital competence can be used to measure the extent to which MSME talents use information technology. According to UNESCO, digital literacy is defined as the ability to use information and communication technology (ICT), evaluate, use, create, and communicate cognitive and technical content and information skills. According to Gilster & Glister (1997), digital competence is described as follows: the ability to understand and use information in various forms. To characterize the process of critical thinking when dealing with digital

media rather than technical skills as a core competency of digital competence and emphasize its critical evaluation through digital media rather than the technical skills required to enter digital media. Digital literacy is one of the pillars supporting the realization of the digital transformation agenda (Kominfo, 2022). The digital transformation process explains the importance of digital literacy to support the innovation process and strengthen competitiveness (Krumsvik, 2014).

The number of MSMEs fostered by the Surakarta City Cooperatives and MSMEs Office until the end of 2018 was around 3,200, specifically in the productive sector. The number of MSMEs in Surakarta who are assisted by the Office of Cooperatives and MSMEs has increased every year by around 10 percent. This increase is in line with the new entrepreneurial growth program, which is carried out every year, while the potential for MSMEs in Surakarta is 43,700, including market traders. Especially for the productive sector, not all of them can be fostered by the Surakarta Office of Cooperatives and MSMEs.

According to Nuryanti (2013), MSMEs are business areas with a high contribution to economic growth, create jobs, and increase people's income. When MSME competition is getting tougher, market position is a prerequisite for increasing competitiveness. One of the factors supporting the development of SMEs is technology, information, and communication resources.

So that sales do not target certain market segments, it is necessary to identify potential customers and the right type of advertisement. Determine the budget needed to reduce marketing costs and identify competitive advantages. Hero of the Economy management or trainers do not recommend focusing on market segments, but in some cases, it is possible if sales in that area can be maximized. SMEs in the Hero of the Economy program are open for assignments from around the



world as they have practiced online marketing through digital marketing training.

The strength of a brand does not come immediately, but there must be a brand strategy that gives consumers a good understanding of the subject of MSME products so that they can create value for consumers in their current conditions, namely in the digital era. The digital age is about the time of new technologies like the internet. In the digital era, SMEs must be good at building a good branding strategy through the use of existing technology. The presence of technology can facilitate people's operations because everyone uses the internet for business related to e-commerce, such as digital media.

Currently, smartphone communication tools can be easily used to perform information search functions on the Internet. While most MSMEs have not maximized access to the Internet with smartphones, this can be shown, which causes their ability to search the Internet to be in the high category. But it is also a good way to search the internet, this must be balanced with the ability of other digital literacy indicators. Using digital media for business purposes can be more efficient and effective.

Online media, also known as digital media, is media that is presented online on the internet. The definition of general online media, namely all types or forms that can only be accessed via the internet contains text, photos, video, and sound (Irwansyah, 2011).

Currently, there are still a few MSME actors who use digital media; their businesses may be left behind by other competitors. MSME actors need to change their mindset to see the importance of technology being able to support the development of their UKM. As it is, the MSME brand can be recognized by the public, and SME operators can also be closer to consumers.

## CONCLUSION

Community partnership activities aim to increase the digital literacy of UKM players in the Mangkubumen Village area, Banjarsari District and Surakarta City to produce lessons learned, namely: 1) Culinary platforms such as Go-food are perceived as the easiest and most practical way for MSMEs to go digital. Instant platforms have advantages, especially for perpetrators, because they only need to register without regularly updating content like social media, blogs, etc. This is due to the limited resources owned by SMEs. 2) Further assistance needed for MSMEs is necessary for administrative registration and helping strengthen brand identity (logo and product names), packaging, and displaying more attractive photos of food products (food photography). 3) The digital literacy of MSME actors in community service activities is still at the stage of using digital tools, at a minimal stage, so continuous education is needed to have more comprehensive digital literacy.

## CREDIT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

**Andre Noevi Rahmanto:** Writing, Methodology, Data curation, Investigation, Reviewing and Editing.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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