

Empowering OTOP Msmes Through Digital Marketing Literacy For Global Market Access

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Abstract.

This international community service program aimed to empower OTOP MSMEs in Samut Prakan, Thailand, by strengthening their digital marketing literacy as a pathway to global market access. Conducted on August 26, 2025, at the Bang Prong Subdistrict Administrative Organization Office, the program was a collaboration between the Doctoral Study Program in Management Science, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, and the Thai Global Business Administration Technological College. The activities included product exhibitions, production process demonstrations, and digital marketing workshops focusing on branding, social media content creation, and international promotion strategies. Evaluation through pre- and post-training surveys indicated significant improvements in three dimensions: understanding of digital marketing, ability to create engaging online content, and confidence in accessing global markets. Participants also reported enhanced entrepreneurial confidence and awareness of global market requirements. The findings highlight that digital marketing literacy is not merely a technical skill but a strategic driver for global competitiveness and cultural sustainability. This program demonstrates that community-based, cross-border collaborations can effectively equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills necessary to expand their reach into international value chains while preserving local identity.

Keywords: OTOP; digital marketing literacy; MSMEs; global market access and community service.

I. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) remain one of the most important pillars of economic growth in ASEAN, contributing significantly to employment generation, innovation, poverty reduction, and regional competitiveness. In Thailand, the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) program has been widely acknowledged as a flagship initiative for community-based entrepreneurship, transforming local wisdom, indigenous knowledge, and cultural heritage into marketable products with economic value [1], [2]. While OTOP enterprises demonstrate uniqueness and creativity, they continue to face structural challenges, particularly in terms of branding, digital literacy, and access to international markets. Limited exposure to global trade requirements and inadequate adoption of digital marketing strategies often prevent these businesses from scaling beyond local or domestic boundaries, thereby restricting their potential for international competitiveness [3]. Over the past decade, the global marketplace has been reshaped by rapid digital transformation. Social media, e-commerce, and mobile platforms have emerged as dominant forces in consumer behavior, serving not only as communication channels but also as the primary spaces where purchase decisions are influenced. According to DataReportal (2025), Thailand ranks among the highest in Southeast Asia in terms of social media penetration, with platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and LINE playing a crucial role in product promotion, customer engagement, and brand visibility [4].

Despite this promising digital landscape, many MSMEs in Thailand lack the necessary skills and knowledge to harness these platforms effectively, leading to lost opportunities for market expansion and reduced competitiveness [5], [6], [7]. Existing scholarship has repeatedly confirmed the significance of digital marketing literacy as a critical enabler for SMEs aiming to compete in global markets. Sharabati et al. [8] emphasized that digital marketing directly enhances brand visibility, customer trust, and long-term competitiveness, while Setini et al. [9] argued that SMEs equipped with digital literacy are better positioned to overcome entry barriers in international trade. Within the Thai context, Wongpun et al. [5] highlighted that

contextualized and hands-on learning approaches such as workshops and practical demonstrations are indispensable in ensuring that entrepreneurs not only understand digital marketing concepts but are also capable of applying them immediately in their businesses. Equally important is the role of academic-community partnerships in bridging knowledge gaps and empowering local enterprises. International community service initiatives have emerged as strategic platforms for linking theory and practice, enabling universities to transfer digital skills and managerial expertise to entrepreneurs. Umiyati et al. [10] demonstrated that cross-country collaboration integrating financial and digital marketing training significantly improved MSME readiness for digital transformation, while Sandira et al. [11] highlighted that marketing management in the digital era is inseparable from innovation, branding, and social media strategies. Similarly, Wahdiniwaty et al. [12] stressed the importance of leveraging digital channels in the tourism and creative industries to sustain cultural products and expand their reach to international audiences.

Beyond marketing and competitiveness, digital literacy contributes to broader aspects of community empowerment. Yani Syafei et al. [13] showed that strengthening technological literacy at the community level, including in fields such as irrigation waste management, fosters institutional resilience and supports the local circular economy. In another study, Yani Syafei et al. [14] revealed how fintech education improved financial inclusion among coffee farmers in Lembang, Indonesia, enabling them to access broader markets and digital finance. These examples underline how literacy initiatives whether in technology, finance, or digital marketing create multiplier effects that enhance both economic sustainability and social empowerment. In response to these challenges and opportunities, the present program was initiated as an international collaboration between the Doctoral Study Program in Management Science, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, and the Thai Global Business Administration Technological College. Conducted on 26 August 2025 at the Bang Prong Subdistrict Administrative Organization Office, Samut Prakan, Thailand, this initiative aimed to empower OTOP MSMEs through digital marketing literacy as a pathway to global market access. By integrating product exhibitions, production process demonstrations, and intensive training workshops, the program sought to provide entrepreneurs with not only conceptual understanding but also practical skills and confidence. Ultimately, this initiative demonstrates how community-based approaches, supported by cross-border academic collaboration, can equip OTOP entrepreneurs with the strategic vision and digital tools necessary to strengthen their participation in global value chains while preserving cultural authenticity.

II. METHODS

The implementation of this international community service program was carefully designed to ensure both contextual relevance and measurable impact. The method covered several aspects: location and time, activity partners, service methods, success indicators, and evaluation techniques. The program was conducted on Tuesday, 26 August 2025, at the Bang Prong Subdistrict Administrative Organization Office, located at 444 หมู่ 1 Bang Prong, Mueang Samut Prakan District, Samut Prakan 10270, Thailand. The venue was strategically chosen due to its accessibility for local OTOP entrepreneurs and its function as a government facility that actively supports community development initiatives. The geographical positioning of Samut Prakan, close to Bangkok and its international logistics networks, also emphasized the program's theme of global market access, symbolically linking local entrepreneurship with international trade opportunities [1], [15]. The primary participants of this program were OTOP MSME entrepreneurs operating in Samut Prakan Province. The selection process was conducted collaboratively between the Doctoral Study Program in Management Science, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, and the Thai Global Business Administration Technological College, in consultation with the Bang Prong Subdistrict Administration. Participants were selected based on three criteria: (a) active involvement in OTOP product development, (b) willingness to adopt digital marketing practices, and (c) potential for market expansion. The institutional partnership allowed the program to integrate academic insights with local knowledge, ensuring relevance to both the Thai entrepreneurial ecosystem and international market demands [2], [5].

The service activities were structured in four stages:

1. Preparation, which included needs assessment, identification of digital literacy gaps, and design of training modules focused on digital marketing and global access readiness.
2. Counseling and Workshops, where participants were introduced to digital marketing literacy, emphasizing key areas such as branding strategies, online content creation, use of e-commerce platforms, and cross-border promotion practices [8].
3. Demonstrations and Mentoring, involving practical exercises in designing digital content (images, videos, and captions) for platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and LINE. Trainers also provided one-on-one mentoring sessions to address individual business challenges [9].
4. Exhibition and Networking, where participants displayed their products in a mini exhibition, practiced their newly developed branding strategies, and received feedback from facilitators and fellow entrepreneurs. This stage functioned as both a testing ground and a networking platform for potential collaborations [12].

Success was measured through both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Quantitatively, success was defined by improvements in participants' digital literacy levels, assessed through pre- and post-training surveys focusing on three dimensions: (a) understanding of digital marketing concepts, (b) ability to create social media content, and (c) confidence in reaching international markets [10]. Qualitatively, success indicators included participants' active engagement in workshops, the originality of digital content produced, and the perceived relevance of training materials to their business contexts [11]. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach combining surveys, observation, and interviews. Pre- and post-training surveys provided measurable data on changes in digital literacy and readiness for global market access. Observational data were collected during workshops to assess participants' engagement and problem-solving abilities. In-depth interviews with selected entrepreneurs captured their reflections on the applicability of training outcomes to real business practices [13], [14]. Additionally, follow-up communication was established through digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp groups and LINE channels) to monitor participants' progress and provide continuous mentorship [4]. This comprehensive implementation method ensured that the program not only delivered knowledge but also created sustainable behavioral changes among OTOP entrepreneurs, positioning them to take advantage of global digital marketplaces while maintaining strong community roots.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the program generated several significant outcomes that were both observable and measurable. The activities consisting of product exhibitions, production process demonstrations, and intensive workshops resulted in notable improvements in participants' knowledge, skills, and confidence regarding digital marketing literacy and readiness for global market access. First, the product exhibition created a platform for OTOP entrepreneurs to present their products in a semi-formal marketplace setting as shown in figure 1 and figure 2. This allowed participants to practice applying branding concepts, such as visual identity, storytelling, and packaging enhancement. Direct feedback from trainers and fellow entrepreneurs reinforced the importance of aligning product presentation with international consumer expectations, particularly in terms of quality, consistency, and cultural appeal.



Fig 1. Product exhibition showcasing OTOP goods and interactive discussion with participants.



Fig 2. Participants presenting their products to trainers and fellow entrepreneurs.

Second, the production demonstrations facilitated the sharing of best practices in maintaining quality standards while communicating production narratives as shown in figure 3 and figure 4. These demonstrations helped participants understand how “behind-the-scenes” content can be transformed into compelling social media material, thus strengthening consumer trust and transparency.



Fig 3. Demonstration of OTOP food production methods.



Fig 4. Trainer guiding participants in documenting production for digital content.

Third, the digital marketing workshops were the central element of the program as shown in figure 5 and figure 6. Training sessions emphasized three main competencies: (a) understanding digital marketing concepts and their relevance for global trade, (b) creating and managing engaging social media content, and (c) developing confidence in accessing international markets. To evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops, pre- and post-training surveys were conducted, focusing on participants’ self-assessed competencies.



Fig 5. Interactive workshop on creating social media content for OTOP branding.



Fig 6. Mentoring session where entrepreneurs practiced uploading and promoting their products online.

The results are presented in Figure 7, which illustrates a clear upward trend across all three dimensions.

- Understanding of Digital Marketing increased from 40% pre-training to 85% post-training. This indicates that the majority of participants gained substantial conceptual clarity regarding digital promotion and its role in international competitiveness.
- Ability to Create Social Media Content improved from 25% to 75%, reflecting a significant enhancement in practical skills such as designing product photos, writing persuasive captions, and using hashtags effectively.
- Confidence in Global Market Access showed growth from 20% to 70%, signifying that participants not only acquired technical knowledge but also developed the confidence to envision their products in international markets.

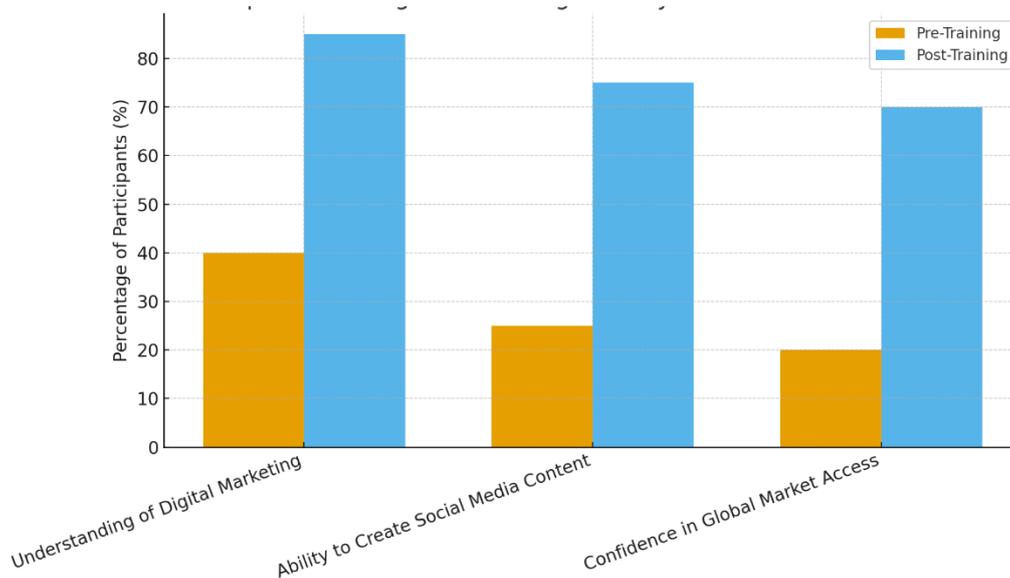


Fig 7. Comparison of Digital Marketing Literacy and Global Market Readiness.

These findings are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the transformative potential of digital literacy interventions. Wongpun et al. [5] found that contextualized training methods significantly increase the applicability of digital tools among Thai MSMEs. Sharabati et al. [8] confirmed that digital marketing strategies enhance brand visibility and customer trust, while Setini et al. [9] demonstrated the role of digital literacy in reducing barriers to global market entry. In the broader ASEAN context, OECD and ERIA [1] emphasized that digitalization is a key driver of MSME resilience and internationalization. Beyond the quantitative outcomes, qualitative feedback from participants underscored the program's impact on entrepreneurial confidence and community solidarity. Several entrepreneurs reported that the collaborative learning environment motivated them to experiment with new forms of content, while others highlighted the usefulness of receiving real-time mentoring during practice sessions. The networking opportunities during the exhibition further reinforced peer-to-peer learning, enabling participants to share challenges and

strategies in branding and global promotion. Overall, the program successfully demonstrated that digital marketing literacy is not merely a technical skill but a strategic enabler of global competitiveness. By equipping OTOP entrepreneurs with knowledge, practical skills, and confidence, the initiative contributed to strengthening their capacity to engage with international markets while preserving their cultural identity and community values.

IV. CONCLUSION

The international community service program on empowering OTOP MSMEs through digital marketing literacy has demonstrated tangible impacts in strengthening entrepreneurial capacity and preparing participants for broader market integration. The activities ranging from product exhibitions, production demonstrations, to intensive digital marketing workshops provided participants not only with conceptual understanding but also with practical skills that are directly applicable to their businesses. Survey results and qualitative feedback confirmed significant improvements in digital marketing comprehension, content creation ability, and confidence in engaging with global markets. More importantly, the program emphasized that digital marketing literacy functions as both a technical competence and a strategic enabler, allowing OTOP entrepreneurs to enhance brand visibility, build consumer trust, and align their cultural products with international expectations. The experience also revealed that sustainable empowerment requires more than one-time interventions.

While the program succeeded in delivering immediate knowledge and motivation, long-term impact depends on continuous mentoring, access to digital infrastructure, and consistent practice in online promotion. Strengthening institutional collaboration between local government, academic institutions, and entrepreneurial associations is therefore critical to sustaining the progress achieved. Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, regular digital literacy training should be institutionalized at the community level to ensure that OTOP entrepreneurs keep pace with the rapid evolution of global digital platforms. Second, entrepreneurs should be encouraged to form peer-support networks where they can share best practices, co-create promotional campaigns, and jointly access larger markets. Third, integration with e-commerce platforms and cross-border digital marketplaces must be prioritized to translate digital literacy into actual international sales opportunities. Finally, policymakers should facilitate supportive ecosystems, including infrastructure, financing, and regulatory frameworks, that enable OTOP entrepreneurs to fully leverage digital tools for sustainable participation in global value chains.

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