Initiating santripreneurship through narrative inquiry: Integration of digital marketing and technical proficiency for pesantren entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Although entrepreneurship training is commonly conducted for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), entrepreneurship training that integrates digital marketing and technical proficiency with a narrative inquiry approach is rarely implemented in Islamic boarding school or pesantren. This narrative inquiry research for community service program aimed to develop and implement an integrated training program that includes excellent service training, local coffee processing, and digital marketing at entrepreneurship-based Islamic boarding schools. Thirteen participants from a pesantren and a entrepreneurship-partner participated in this study. Data were collected from observation and unstructured interviews spanning five months. Drawing on community engagement theory, the findings identified three micro themes: active participation and community involvement; multidisciplinary collaboration and synergy; and empowerment and self-transformation. The contribution of this present study is to provide empirical and practical evidence regarding how community engagement perspective can describe to what extent digital marketing and technical proficiency help micro, small, and medium enterprises in pesantren.
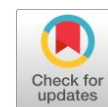
1. Introduction

"Every journey begins with the first step, and every dream can be achieved through hard work and prayer."

I am a student at the Bakti Ummah Islamic Boarding School in Ponorogo Regency. Coming from a small village, I ventured to this place with the hope of learning religious teachings, life skills, and preparing for a better future. Here, we learn a lot, from religious knowledge to self-reliance. Every morning, we wake up early to clean our rooms, wash our clothes, and manage various daily tasks with full responsibility. Alhamdulillah, through the assistance of the pesantren's business incubation, we established Bakti Café, a business managed by the students. Through this café, we learn to become proficient managers, understanding business management, customer service, and marketing strategies. All of this is done by us, for us, and for our community. (P-4: 02/2024)

Although entrepreneurship training is commonly conducted for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), entrepreneurship training that integrates digital marketing and technical proficiency with a narrative inquiry approach is rarely implemented in Islamic boarding school or pesantren-based MSMEs [1]. The narrative inquiry approach provides an opportunity for the author to narrate community service programs, as it allows the author to deeply explore the personal experiences of participants, offering an authentic and emotional perspective [2]. Moreover, this approach helps bridge individual experiences with the broader social context, resulting in richer and more meaningful narratives for readers.

In the experiences shared by P-7 and P-2, training in excellent service, optimal utilization of local products, and digital marketing are key elements in enhancing the economic capacity and independence of pesantren-based entrepreneurship. This capacity building is not only aimed at strengthening the

economic position of the pesantren but also at creating job opportunities and improving the quality of life for students and the surrounding community. Bakti Ummah Pesantren, located in Ponorogo Regency, East Java, has committed to developing entrepreneurship skills among students to contribute to society. At the upstream stage, Bakti Ummah Pesantren is involved in economic empowerment through entrepreneurship training. The primary target of this initiative is students, especially those engaged in economic fields and entrepreneurial learning. To achieve these goals, Bakti Ummah Pesantren has formed learning and experience-sharing groups to enhance entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.

Bakti Café is an initiative driven by our passion to develop economic potential and independence. Here, students from diverse backgrounds unite in an effort we hope will have a positive impact on many people. However, our journey is still long and full of challenges. (P-7: 02/2024)

A year has passed, and although we have worked hard, there are still many things we need to learn. For instance, the quality of our products still needs improvement; they don't fully meet the standards we aspire to. Our marketing strategies also need refinement. We have yet to reach a broader market, and business management challenges often leave us confused. (P-2: 02/2024)

Bakti Ummah Pesantren demonstrates the diversity of entrepreneurs with varied economic backgrounds. One of the business developments undertaken by Bakti Ummah Pesantren is Bakti Café. This café has been in business for the past year and requires further guidance to improve product quality and marketing strategies. At the downstream stage, Bakti Ummah Pesantren has assisted entrepreneurs in increasing production and expanding market reach. However, there are still challenges that need to be addressed, such as limited market access, business management difficulties, and a lack of understanding of evolving market needs. Despite these challenges, P-1 narrates that Bakti Café is not just a business venture but a symbol of hope for its students.

Bakti Ummah Pesantren is a place where students from underprivileged backgrounds, who have grown up in scarcity but possess extraordinary spirit, are taught not only religious knowledge but also self-reliance and life preparedness. Bakti Café is our great hope for them. Here, our students learn about business, from management to customer service. This is an important provision so that they can be self-reliant and competitive in the workforce. Watching them work with enthusiasm makes me proud. Although they come from difficult backgrounds, they have shown that with opportunity, they can grow and succeed. Bakti Café is not just a business venture; it is a symbol of our hope. We believe that with the education and experience they gain here, they will be able to face the challenges of the outside world. This is our great hope at Bakti Ummah Pesantren. (P-1: 01/2024)

Preliminary observations and interviews with participants indicate that the lack of integrated and holistic training programs at pesantren, which not only focus on technical skills but also on digital marketing and customer service, is a practical problem gap that often occurs. Existing community service programs often focus on a single aspect of skills training, such as entrepreneurship or digital marketing, without integrating them with other relevant skills [3], [4]. The solutions proposed in the literature include specific technical skills training, digital marketing training, and entrepreneurship training. For example, studies by Afrilia and Khouroh demonstrated the effectiveness of digital marketing training in increasing the sales of local products [5], [6]. However, there is no community service program that combines these three elements—excellent service, local product processing, and digital marketing—into an integrated community service program for pesantren.

This community service aims to develop and implement an integrated training program that includes excellent service training, local coffee processing, and digital marketing at entrepreneurship-based Islamic boarding schools. The hypothesis proposed in this santripreneurship activity through narrative inquiry is that an integrated training program will be more effective in enhancing the economic independence and business skills of students compared to training that focuses on only one aspect of skills. The scope of this community service includes implementing training programs in several entrepreneurship-based Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, focusing on developing skills relevant to the needs of the modern labor market. The results of this community service-based research are expected to make a significant contribution to the literature on entrepreneurship education in pesantren with an authentic perspective and offer a replicable training model for other pesantren or MSMEs. To be more specific, this community service and study aimed to answer the following research question:

How do digital marketing and technical proficiency help micro, small, and medium enterprises in pesantren?.

2. Method

In February 2024, we, a service team from Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, began a long and meaningful journey by visiting Pondok Bakti Ummah as show in Fig. 1. There, we were greeted by one ustadz, one ustadzah, and ten students who manage Bakti Cafe. In this first meeting, we felt their passion and enthusiasm that inspired us to give our best in this service. The initial observations and interviews that we conducted for two full months provided an in-depth picture of the challenges and hopes they had. Stories about the students' hard work in managing the cafe amidst limited facilities and technical knowledge became our main motivation to move on to the next stage.

Fig. 1. Bakti Cafè Pondok Bakti Ummah Ponorogo

In May 2024, after analyzing the needs that we had collected, we began looking for the right partner to support the training that we would provide. The meeting with 'Toko Kopi Hataria' was a turning point. With their strong background in the world of coffee and their commitment to empowering small businesses, we felt confident that they were the right partner. Hataria understands the importance of supporting small businesses with limited budgets and has a vision that aligns with ours, namely maximizing the entrepreneurial potential of poor students at Pondok Bakti Ummah. This slow-bar coffee shop could spend about 160 cups of coffee a night which we believed that it could be a good-partner for Bakti Cafè. We held several meetings to design a targeted and sustainable training program, with a focus on digital marketing and technical proficiency. Toko Kopi Hataria show in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Toko Kopi Hataria Ponorogo

June 2024 was the culmination of all the preparations we had made. The training program began with a human resource and capital analysis session, where students were guided to recognize their potential and challenges. Observing the potential of local products opened their eyes to the various opportunities

that could be developed. We also conducted comparative studies with similar businesses in other cities, which provided new insights into how to process and market coffee products. In the digital marketing session, students learned how to effectively use Instagram for branding and marketing their products. Through the stories they shared, we felt the transformation that was happening to them. Students who were initially hesitant and lacked confidence, are now starting to show courage and creativity in managing the café. Toko Kopi Hataria with slow-bar concept coffee-shop show in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3. Toko Kopi Hataria with slow-bar concept coffee-shop

We also saw how collaboration between academics, the community, and the business world can create more meaningful change. Using the perspective of community engagement theory [7], [8], we emphasize the aspects of participation, collaboration, and empowerment between the service team, partner team, and target community team in narrating this community service program. In the context of the community service program carried out by the Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, this theory is very relevant for several reasons, namely 1) this program not only involves students and caretakers of Pondok Bakti Ummah, but also integrates Toko Kopi Hataria as a partner who has expertise and practical experience in the world of coffee. The narrative inquiry approach used allows all parties to share their stories, challenges, and hopes, creating space for active participation and constructive dialogue; 2) this theory emphasizes the importance of collaboration between various parties academics, society, and the business world. By involving Toko Kopi Hataria, this program has succeeded in creating a synergy that enriches the knowledge and skills of the students, allowing them to learn from the experience and practical expertise provided by the business partners; 3) this program also aims to empower students by providing training that not only improves technical and marketing skills, but also builds their self-confidence and entrepreneurial capacity.

The integration of narrative inquiry for this program is in line with the empowerment principles in community engagement theory, which encourages community members to overcome limitations and develop their potential independently. By using community engagement theory, this program does not only focus on the end result, but also on the process that involves all elements of the community in learning and development [1], [9]. This approach ensures that every step taken is the result of continuous collaboration and dialogue, creating a more sustainable and relevant impact for the community. We displayed the narrative data using italic words. We used participant codes (P-1, P-2, P-3, ... P-13.) to display participants' narratives (see Table 1.). We also coded the time data collected using month and year (month/year). After analyzing the narrative data, we looked at the differences and similarities of the data to identify the patterns, find the themes, and create the final report based on the community engagement theory.

Table 1. Participant code

Participant code		
P-1 to P-10	P-11 and P-12	P-13
Santri of pesantren who managed Bakti Cafè	Pesantren caretaker	Owner of Toko Kopi Hataria

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Active Participation and Community Involvement

Since I first joined Bakti Cafè, I have always felt that there is a lot I can learn. When the service team from Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo came, I felt this was a great opportunity to improve my skills. I not only attended every training session, but I also actively asked questions and shared ideas. For example, when we discussed how to increase sales, I proposed adding a new menu that was more attractive to customers. I also shared my experiences about the challenges we face, such as the difficulty in obtaining quality raw materials at affordable prices. Through this discussion, I feel more confident and motivated to continue to develop. (P-3: 05/2024). Collaboration with academia show in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4. Collaboration with academia

When the team from the university came, I initially doubted whether I could follow all the training they offered. However, their passion and enthusiasm were contagious to me. I started to actively engage, not only in training sessions, but also in program planning. I remember, when we were discussing digital marketing strategies, I suggested creating an Instagram account and started posting interesting content. I also learned a lot from other people's experiences and started to see opportunities that I had never thought of before. My participation was not just about being present, but also about giving my best for this cafe. (P-5: 05/2024). Active participation from Bakti Ummah santri show in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5. Active participation from Bakti Ummah santri

This finding highlights the importance of active participation from all parties involved in the program, including students, caretakers of Pondok Bakti Ummah, and partners from Toko Kopi Hataria. This active participation involves not only physical presence, but also contributing ideas, sharing experiences, and involvement in decision-making. Narratives from student participants and Bakti Cafè managers said that community involvement helped them find new, meaningful insights for the santripreneurship-based business they were running.

As a caretaker at Pondok Bakti Ummah, I always try to give the best for our students. When the community service team invited us to collaborate, I saw this as a golden opportunity to improve the skills and knowledge of the students. I was

involved in every stage of the program, from planning to implementation. I provided input based on our experiences at the boarding school, such as the importance of teaching the values of honesty and responsibility in entrepreneurship. I also encouraged the students to actively participate and not be afraid to try new things. Through this program, I saw positive changes in them, both in skills and attitudes. (P-11: 05/2024)

When the team from the Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo contacted us to collaborate on a training program at Pondok Bakti Ummah, I felt this was an extraordinary opportunity to share knowledge and experience. I believe that empowering small businesses is the key to building a stronger community. In every meeting, I always share practical experiences about the world of coffee, from how to choose the best coffee beans to effective marketing techniques. I also actively listen to the needs and challenges faced by the students, and together we find the right solutions. This engagement is not only about providing training, but also about creating sustainable and mutually supportive relationships. (P-13: 05/2024).

The analysis based on the Community Engagement theory shows that the active participation and collaboration carried out by various parties, such as the students who manage Bakti Cafe and the caretakers of Pondok Bakti Ummah, reflect the main principles of this theory. P-3 shows that the form of involvement is not only physically present, but also playing an active role in training sessions, proposing innovative ideas, and sharing experiences about operational challenges, which indicates constructive dialogue and deep involvement in the learning process. P-1 emphasizes the contribution of caretakers in providing valuable input based on experience, as well as their encouragement for students to actively participate and overcome their fear of trying new things. Meanwhile, P-13 as an expert partner sees this collaboration as an opportunity to share knowledge and experience, and support the empowerment of small businesses as the key to building a stronger community. In each meeting, this partner not only provides practical training about the world of coffee, but also actively listens to the needs and challenges faced by students, and works together to find the right solution. Toko Kopi Hataria demonstrating how to make coffee with local beans show in Fig. 6.

Fig. 6. Toko Kopi Hataria demonstrating how to make coffee with local beans

This engagement demonstrates a strong collaboration between academia, community and business, where each party contributes their knowledge and expertise, creating an environment that supports individual and collective transformation. This is in line with the empowerment principle in Community Engagement theory [4], [10], [11], which emphasizes the importance of community participation, collaboration and capacity building to achieve sustainable and meaningful change.

3.2. Multidisciplinary Collaboration and Synergy

When we started training with Toko Kopi Hataria and the community service team from Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, I felt open to new perspectives on business characteristics, especially the coffee business. I, along with my fellow Bakti Cafè managers, actively participated in every discussion about developing new coffee products. We gained valuable insights from Mas Hataria on how to choose the best coffee beans with the budget we had and the right roasting techniques. Not only that, he taught us observation techniques and reading coffee consumer patterns in Ponorogo Regency. This collaboration opened our eyes to the importance of details in ensuring product quality, marketing products and reading market conditions in the future. (P-8: 05/2024)

Previously, I never imagined that I would learn about marketing strategies from people who were actually in the field. In the training session, I discussed with Mas Hataria about how we could increase sales in a more effective way. With simple capital, Mas Hataria showed a strategy for observing the consumer style of Ponorogo coffee consumers, how premium coffee blends can be measured for a more affordable price. This gives me a clear picture of how the business world works and how I can better support our cafe. (P-6: 05/2024).

This finding underscores the importance of collaboration between different parties with different backgrounds and expertise. The synergy between academics, the community, and the business world creates a rich and diverse learning environment. From the perspective of Community Engagement theory, these two narratives illustrate effective multidisciplinary collaboration between academics, the community, and the business world. P-8 showed, as a student, actively participating in discussions and learning directly from experienced practitioners. This active participation reflects one of the main principles of Community Engagement theory, namely the direct involvement of the target community in the learning and development process. P-8 did not only receive passive information but also contributed through their ideas, indicating a constructive two-way dialogue.

I am very impressed with the enthusiasm of the students at Bakti Cafe to learn. In every meeting, I try to provide a deep understanding of the world of coffee, from the process to sales. Seeing fresh ideas from Bakti Cafe friends about product development, I feel optimistic that this collaboration will produce results that are beneficial for all parties. (P-13: 05/2024). Bakti Cafè consulting their coffee blends to Toko Kopi Hataria owner show in Fig. 7.

Fig. 7. Bakti Cafè consulting their coffee blends to Toko Kopi Hataria owner

P-13, owner of Toko Kopi Hataria, shows the commitment of the business world in supporting community capacity development. P-13 not only provides technical training but also listens to and appreciates ideas from students, creating a strong synergy between practical knowledge and fresh ideas from training participants. This is in line with the principle of collaboration in Community Engagement theory, where the success of the program depends on equal and mutually beneficial partnerships. These two narratives highlight how collaboration between various parties with different backgrounds and expertise can create a rich and diverse learning environment. This synergy not only enriches the students' learning experience but also ensures that the knowledge shared is relevant and can be directly applied. Through active engagement and collaboration, this program demonstrates how community engagement theory can be applied to achieve sustainable and meaningful change in a community [7], [12].

This community service found that multidisciplinary collaboration and synergy between academics, communities, and businesses can create a rich and diverse learning environment, which is important in developing the capacity of Islamic boarding school student or santri MSME actors [4], [13]. The new concept revealed is the importance of active involvement from all parties in the learning process, which is not only limited to providing information but also involving constructive two-way dialogue. The purpose of community service, namely increasing the capacity of santri in managing MSMEs, is achieved through effective synergy between the parties involved. Santri not only learn technical skills but also get the opportunity to contribute valuable ideas, demonstrating the successful application of community

engagement theory [8], [9], [14]. However, there are exceptions related to the limitations of some santri in consistently participating in training, which cannot be fully explained in this finding and requires further research.

Compared to previous literature on community engagement theory [7], [8], this finding stands out in terms of how collaboration between the business world, in this case Toko Kopi Hataria, and the santri community can create a more equal and mutually beneficial relationship. While previous research tends to emphasize collaboration between academics and communities, this study shows that businesses can play a significant role in supporting community capacity building [6], [15]. This enriches the understanding of how multidisciplinary partnerships can be effectively implemented in the context of community service training.

3.3. Empowerment and Self-Transformation

Since we started the digital marketing training program with the help of Toko Kopi Hataria, I have seen significant changes in the students. I am impressed with how they have adapted new techniques, such as the use of Instagram Stories and Reels to promote Bakti Café. Previously, we only relied on word of mouth and simple posters, but now the students have begun to understand the importance of consumer engagement in every post. They even create content that involves customers in everyday stories at the cafe, such as photos of coffee with interesting captions. Seeing their enthusiasm, I feel confident that this training has not only given them new skills but also empowered them to think more creatively and strategically in managing their business. (P-1: 05/2024)

This finding focuses on the changes that occurred in the students as a result of the training program. The empowerment provided through the training improved the students' technical, marketing, and self-confidence skills. P-1 shows how the theory of community engagement can be implemented to create empowerment and transformation in the community. In this narrative, P-1 notes the significant changes that occurred in the students after they participated in the digital marketing training provided by Toko Kopi Hataria. This reflects one of the main principles of community engagement theory, namely the active participation of community members in the learning and development process [8], [9].

When Toko Kopi Hataria taught us about the importance of storytelling through Instagram Stories, I felt something change in my perspective on business. Previously, I only saw Instagram as a place to share photos, but now I understand that it can be a tool to create deeper connections with customers. We started creating stories that show behind-the-scenes moments at Bakti Café, such as preparations before opening or testimonials from satisfied customers. Every time I saw a positive response from customers, I felt a transformation in myself. I started thinking more broadly about how we could use social media to not only sell products but also build a loyal community. This was a real empowerment for me, because I felt like I had more control in how we presented ourselves to the outside world. (P-5: 05/2024)

P-5 shows how the theory of community engagement can drive individual transformation through active involvement in the learning process. In this narrative, P-5 tells how digital marketing training from Toko Kopi Hataria has changed his perspective on the use of social media, especially Instagram, as an effective marketing tool. Initially, P-5 only saw Instagram as a platform for sharing photos, but after taking the training, he began to understand and utilize Reels to tell the story of Bakti Café's business journey. Next, P-6 shares his experience.

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Community engagement theory emphasizes the importance of active participation and collaboration between various stakeholders [7], [10], [16], in this case between students and business partners. P-6 not only received information passively but also actively participated in implementing the strategies taught, demonstrating deep involvement in the learning process. This transformation reflects the empowerment that occurs when individuals are given the tools and knowledge to develop new skills, which in turn increases their self-confidence and ability to contribute to the community [17]. Instagram reels show in Fig. 8.

Fig. 8. Instagram reels by Bakti Cafè as its way of digital marketing

The findings report that empowerment through digital marketing training can significantly drive self-transformation of MSME students, characterized by increased technical skills, self-confidence, and new understanding of digital marketing. The new concept revealed is the importance of active participation and deep involvement in the learning process to drive individual transformation, which is in line with the principles of community engagement theory. Furthermore, empowerment of MSME students through digital skill improvement is achieved through training that not only teaches techniques but also changes the way students view marketing and business [11]. However, there are exceptions in some students who may not have fully implemented the knowledge gained, indicating the need for further mentoring or reinforcement of the follow-up program.

Compared to previous literature [4], [18], these findings stand out in terms of how deep involvement and active participation in training can lead to more significant self-transformation. Previous literature often emphasizes empowerment from a structural or organizational perspective [19], but this study shows that individual transformation through changes in perspective and increased self-confidence are equally important outcomes.

4. Conclusion

There are three themes in the narrative inquiry findings based on the perspective of community involvement theory in the santripreneurship community service program, namely: 1) active participation and community involvement; 2) multidisciplinary collaboration and synergy; and 3) empowerment and self-transformation. Each finding has different program significance and implications. First, active participation and community involvement underline how sustainable and meaningful change can be driven by community participation, collaboration, and capacity building. This shows practical and methodological implications, that designing training programs needs to involve active participation and multidisciplinary collaboration, which not only focuses on improving technical skills but also on empowering participants' mental and emotional skills. This approach ensures that training is not just a one-way transfer of information, but a dynamic and interactive learning process. Thus, training will be more effective in creating sustainable transformation, because participants feel directly involved and have a sense of ownership of the change process.

Second, multidisciplinary collaboration and synergy in this program are significant because they emphasize the importance of synergy between various parties with different backgrounds in achieving more optimal results in santri MSME training. In practical terms, these findings suggest that involving the business world as training partners can provide significant added value in community capacity building. The implication is that training programs should be designed with consideration for the direct involvement of all parties, including training participants, in an open and collaborative dialogue [20]. In methodological terms, this study shows that the narrative inquiry approach used is effective in exploring the experiences and perspectives of training participants, providing deeper insights into the dynamics of

collaboration and community engagement. This emphasizes the importance of this method in community service research to capture the nuances and complexities of interactions between parties involved [15]. These findings enrich the literature on community engagement and provide practical guidance for implementing more inclusive and effective community service programs.

Third, empowerment and self-transformation are significant because they show that well-designed training, involving active participation and collaboration between stakeholders, can produce profound transformation at the individual level. In practical terms, this emphasizes the importance of designing training programs that focus not only on technical aspects but also on the mental and emotional empowerment of participants. The methodological implication is that a theory-based approach to community engagement can be used to measure and analyze individual transformation in the context of community empowerment [7], [17]. It can be concluded that the three findings confirm the relevance of the Community Engagement theory as an analytical framework for understanding the process of self-participation, community involvement, multidisciplinary collaboration, synergy, empowerment and transformation in the context of community service because this framework can provide richer insights into how interaction and active participation can drive self-transformation and community empowerment.

Although this program has succeeded in demonstrating the importance of active participation, multidisciplinary collaboration, and empowerment in the context of MSME santri training, there are several weaknesses that need to be considered for future community program and research. One of the main weaknesses is the lack of long-term monitoring of the impact of the training, especially in terms of maintaining the transformation and empowerment that has been achieved by the participants. In addition, although collaboration with business partners has shown positive results, there are still limitations in involving more parties, such as the government or non-profit organizations that can expand the impact of the program. Further programs that can be carried out are ongoing mentoring that focuses on monitoring and evaluating the long-term impact of the training, as well as developing a wider collaboration network by involving various stakeholders, including financial institutions, government, and local communities. This can ensure that the transformation that has been achieved by the participants is not only temporary, but can continue to grow and provide sustainable benefits for the santri community.

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Declarations

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