

SMARTPHONE-BASED PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY TRAINING TO STRENGTHEN VISUAL MARKETING SKILLS OF A RIBBON-EMBROIDERY COMMUNITY IN GEBANGSARI, SEMARANG

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Abstract

The ribbon embroidery community fostered by Lia Collection in Gebangsari Village, Semarang, produces fabric-based handicrafts featuring modified ribbon embroidery techniques. Despite their market potential, some members still have limited awareness of the strategic role of product photography and lack the skills to independently create promotional visual content using smartphones. This community engagement program aims to improve participants' knowledge and practical skills in simple, attractive, and low-cost product photography. The program involves needs identification, instructional sessions, demonstrations, hands-on practice, discussions, mentoring, and evaluation through pretests and post tests. The training covers the role of product photography in marketing, product arrangement, lighting techniques, the development of a simple mini studio, smartphone-based photography, and basic image editing. The evaluation results show improvements across all assessed indicators, particularly participants' understanding of the importance of product photography, its relevance to business development, their ability to arrange products effectively, and their capacity to produce product photographs independently. Before-and-after documentation also demonstrates more structured product presentation, cleaner backgrounds, and improved visual appeal. These findings indicate that practical, affordable, and context-responsive training can strengthen visual communication capabilities and support the marketing activities of community-based microenterprises.

Keywords: community empowerment; product photography; visual marketing; smartphone; ribbon embroidery

Abstrak

Komunitas sulam pita binaan Lia Collection di Kelurahan Gebangsari, Kota Semarang, menghasilkan kerajinan kain dengan modifikasi sulam pita yang memiliki potensi untuk dikembangkan melalui pemasaran visual. Namun, sebagian anggota masih belum memahami pentingnya foto produk dan belum terampil menghasilkan materi promosi secara mandiri menggunakan smartphone. Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan meningkatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan peserta dalam fotografi produk yang sederhana, menarik, dan berbiaya rendah. Metode pelaksanaan meliputi identifikasi kebutuhan, sosialisasi, demonstrasi, praktik langsung, diskusi, pendampingan, serta evaluasi melalui pretest dan posttest. Materi pelatihan mencakup fungsi foto produk dalam pemasaran, penataan objek, pencahayaan, pembuatan studio mini sederhana, teknik pemotretan menggunakan telepon pintar, dan penyuntingan dasar. Hasil evaluasi menunjukkan peningkatan pada seluruh indikator, terutama pemahaman tentang pentingnya foto produk, keterkaitannya dengan pengembangan usaha, kemampuan menata produk, dan keterampilan menghasilkan foto secara mandiri. Dokumentasi sebelum dan sesudah pelatihan juga memperlihatkan tampilan objek yang lebih terarah, latar yang lebih bersih, dan penyajian produk yang lebih menarik. Program pengabdian ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan yang praktis, terjangkau, dan sesuai dengan kebutuhan peserta mampu memperkuat kemampuan komunikasi visual serta mendukung pemasaran usaha mikro berbasis komunitas.

Kata Kunci: pemberdayaan komunitas; fotografi produk; pemasaran visual; smartphone; sulam pita

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INTRODUCTION

In digital marketing, visual content serves not merely to enhance product appearance but also as part of the consumer experience through which information is received and product evaluations are formed across online channels. Nurfaizal et al. (2026) reported that digital customer experience and social media marketing positively influence perceived value and purchase intention. These findings indicate that the quality of communication delivered through digital media should be managed as an integral component of consumer perception formation. In the context of craft marketing, product photography represents a primary visual touchpoint because it enables prospective consumers to identify a product's form, color, details, and distinctive characteristics before further interaction.

Communication through social media also contributes to strengthening brand value and facilitating information exchange among consumers. Dhewi & Kurnianto (2023) found that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand equity, while word of mouth and electronic word of mouth further reinforce this relationship. Conceptually, these findings indicate that social media content should communicate product identity and value clearly and consistently to support effective brand communication. Accordingly, access to appropriate and high-quality product photographs represents a fundamental requirement for business owners who rely on social media as a primary promotional channel.

The effectiveness of digital marketing is determined not only by market knowledge but also by the ability of business actors to translate such knowledge into actionable marketing practices. In a study of 370 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia, Rahman (2026) found that market knowledge strengthens digital content marketing and social media marketing but does not directly improve business performance. Its effect is primarily realized through actionable digital marketing practices. Within this framework, the ability to produce product photographs independently constitutes an important operational capability, bridging entrepreneurs' understanding of market needs with the production of visual content ready for digital promotion.

Strengthening this capacity is particularly important for microenterprises and communities undergoing digitalization. Suyatna et al. (2026) showed that limited digital literacy, motivation, and inconsistent mentoring can impede the sustainability of MSME digital transformation, indicating the need for sustained capacity building and support. Accordingly, hands-on training is relevant because it provides not only knowledge but also immediately applicable skills. The use of smartphones for product-photography training is consistent with the principle of accessible technology, particularly when participants already own the devices and can independently use them for routine promotional activities.

Ribbon embroidery is a development of embroidery techniques that uses ribbon as a decorative element to create textured motifs on textile-based products. Applying embroidery techniques to various product components can enhance aesthetic value, while ribbon-embroidery production also offers economic potential for households and artisan communities (Siswoyo & Yulistiana, 2016; Veronica, 2018). Because aesthetic value is a defining characteristic of these crafts, clear visual presentation is particularly relevant for promotion, especially as marketing increasingly uses digital media.

Lia Collection is a craft enterprise located in Gebangsari Village, Genuk District, Semarang City. Established in 2010, it produces women's bags, headscarves, cushion covers, wallets, and tablecloths featuring ribbon-embroidery modifications. The enterprise

also mentors women in the surrounding community in craft production and community-based business development. Consequently, strengthening marketing capacity at Lia Collection may benefit not only a single business unit but also the broader community members involved in production and enterprise development

Preliminary observations identified two priority problems. First, not all members understood the role of product photography in supporting marketing activities. Second, not all members were able to produce adequate product photographs using the smartphones they already owned. These issues are particularly relevant to digital marketing because product photographs function as a form of visual communication that conveys product characteristics, appearance, and information to prospective consumers (Sari & Irena, 2021). Thus, the principal gap among the partner community was not device availability, but rather the knowledge and skills required to optimize existing devices for producing promotional visual materials. Based on the observations and interviews conducted, the problems and solutions we propose for this community service initiative are outlined in the following table:

Table 1. Problem-Solution Framework

No.	Partner Problem	Initial Condition	Proposed Solution
1	Limited understanding of the importance of product photography	Participants had limited awareness of the role of product photography in supporting marketing activities.	Provide introductory education on the role and importance of product photography in digital marketing.
2	Limited ability to arrange products for photography	Product arrangement was not yet optimal and visual distractions were still present.	Provide demonstrations and hands-on practice in product arrangement and composition.
3	Limited understanding of simple lighting techniques	Participants had limited knowledge of how to use lighting effectively for product photography.	Introduce practical and affordable lighting techniques using readily available materials.
4	Limited access to professional photography equipment	Participants primarily relied on smartphones and did not use dedicated cameras.	Optimize participants' existing smartphones as accessible tools for product photography.
5	Limited ability to produce promotional photographs independently	Participants were not yet able to consistently produce attractive product photographs on their own.	Conduct demonstrations, hands-on practice, basic editing, and direct mentoring to develop independent photography skills.

The problem–solution framework was developed based on the identified needs and existing capacity of the partner community. A needs-based approach is important in community-engagement programs because it enables interventions to be aligned with community priorities, existing resources, barriers, and desired forms of support (Cyril et al.,

2023). In the present program, the main problems included limited understanding of the importance of product photography, inadequate product arrangement and lighting skills, limited access to dedicated photography equipment, and insufficient ability to independently produce promotional visual content. These problems were addressed through introductory education, demonstrations, hands-on practice, smartphone optimization, basic editing, and direct mentoring. Such a practice-oriented approach is consistent with previous community-engagement programs demonstrating that smartphone-based photography training can improve MSMEs' ability to produce visual content for digital marketing (Gobang, 2024; Indrashwara et al., 2024). Similarly, recent community-service evidence indicates that combining needs analysis, theoretical instruction, hands-on photography practice, evaluation, and mentoring can improve participants' understanding and practical skills in product photography (Muafi et al., 2026). Therefore, the framework links each identified partner problem with a targeted and feasible intervention while emphasizing the use of existing resources—in this case, participants' smartphones—to support the sustainability and independent application of the skills acquired during the program.

Previous community engagement programs have demonstrated that product-photography training using simple equipment can improve business actors' ability to prepare promotional visual materials. Training for MSMEs in Gebangsari emphasized the use of affordable equipment to produce photographs suited to promotional needs (Saptiyono et al., 2021), while training for start-up enterprises showed that smartphones can serve as the primary tool for independently strengthening visual branding (Nurlaily et al., 2021). Similar activities among MSMEs in Demak Regency integrated photography techniques, simple studio setups, and editing as practical skills applicable by business operators (Ardhianto et al., 2024). Saptiyono et al. (2022) likewise emphasized smartphone photography as a more practical and economical alternative because it enables entrepreneurs to create promotional visuals using devices already available to them. Collectively, this evidence supports the feasibility of a practice-oriented training approach to address the needs of the ribbon-embroidery community in Gebangsari.

Based on this analysis, the selected intervention comprised an introductory session and hands-on smartphone-based product-photography training. The program aimed to improve participants' understanding of the role of product photography in marketing; develop skills in object arrangement, basic lighting, background selection, and image capture; and enable participants to produce product photographs independently using available devices. Specifically, the program focused on the ribbon-embroidery community in Gebangsari and utilized participants' own smartphones, allowing the acquired skills to be applied sustainably in routine business promotion.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The activity was conducted on Sunday, 24 May 2026, at Jl. Padi Tengah VI, Genuk District, Semarang City. Participants comprised 20 members of the ribbon-embroidery community mentored by Lia Collection. The partner community actively participated in the introductory session, hands-on practice, discussion, and evaluation.

The community-engagement method combined knowledge enhancement, training, demonstration, and mentoring. The preparatory phase included a needs assessment survey, team formation based on relevant competencies, scheduling and task allocation, and

preparation of training modules and equipment. The implementation phase began with a pretest, followed by material delivery and practical activities, and concluded with a posttest to assess changes in participants' understanding. Training content covered the role of product photography in marketing, basic principles of object arrangement, use of lighting, construction of a simple mini studio from readily available materials, smartphone photography techniques, and basic editing. After the demonstration, participants photographed available craft products and received direct guidance from the community-engagement team.

Evaluation was conducted descriptively by comparing pretest and posttest responses and observing the photographs produced by participants. Evaluation indicators included knowledge of the importance of product photography, understanding that visual presentation supports business development, ability to prepare visually appealing photographic objects, and ability to photograph products independently using a smartphone. Each item was assessed using a 5 scale. Scores were converted into percentages using the following formula: $\text{obtained score}/\text{maximum score} \times 100$

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The activity was implemented as scheduled, and all participants attended the material delivery, discussion, question-and-answer, and product photography practice sessions. During the practical session, participants learned to construct a simple mini studio and immediately photographed products under guidance from the community-engagement team. Participants demonstrated active engagement and responded positively to the material presented. Figure 2 documents the smartphone-based product photography training conducted with the ribbon embroidery community in Gebangsari.



Figure 1. Presentation and Discussion Session



Figure 2. Implementation of the Product Photography Training

Evaluation results showed improvement across all indicators measured through the pretest and posttest. These findings indicate that the training contributed to improvements in participants' knowledge and understanding of product photography and its relevance to business development. The first indicator, namely knowledge of the importance of product photography, increased from 81.11 to 96.67, representing a gain of 15.56 points. The relatively high posttest score indicates that most participants had developed a strong understanding of the role of product photography as a component of visual communication in marketing. This finding is consistent with previous community-service programs showing that practical product-photography training can improve MSME participants' understanding of product photography concepts and their ability to utilize smartphones to produce promotional visual content (Indrashwara et al., 2024; Wicaksono, 2026). The use of pretest and posttest assessments is also appropriate for identifying changes in learning outcomes because the comparison between measurements before and after training provides evidence of changes that occur during the intervention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024). Thus, the increase from 81.11 to 96.67 suggests that the introductory explanation, demonstrations, and practical activities successfully reinforced participants' understanding of why product photography is important for presenting products in digital marketing contexts.

The second indicator, namely participants' understanding that visual presentation supports business development, increased from 84.44 to 92.22, representing a gain of 7.78 points. Although this was the smallest increase among the two knowledge-related indicators, the relatively high pretest score suggests that participants already possessed a comparatively good initial understanding of the relationship between visual product presentation and business development. The smaller gain may therefore reflect a possible ceiling effect, whereby participants who began with relatively high scores had less room for further improvement. Nevertheless, the increase in the posttest score indicates that the

training strengthened participants' existing understanding rather than merely introducing a completely new concept. This finding is in line with recent community-engagement programs that emphasize the importance of combining theoretical explanation with hands-on product photography practice, mentoring, and evaluation to strengthen MSME digital-promotion capabilities (Muafi et al., 2026). Similar evidence from product-photography training also shows that practice-oriented interventions can improve participants' understanding of visual content and its application in digital marketing (Utami et al., 2025). Therefore, the improvement observed in this indicator suggests that the training helped participants better connect product appearance and visual presentation with the broader objective of supporting promotional activities, although further monitoring would be required to determine whether these improvements translate into measurable changes in social-media engagement, customer reach, or business performance..

Greater improvement was observed in participants' practical skills than in the knowledge-related indicators. The ability to prepare visually appealing photographic objects increased from 64.44 in the pretest to 86.67 in the posttest, representing an improvement of 22.22 points. This substantial increase indicates that participants became more capable of applying principles of product arrangement, composition, and visual presentation after receiving demonstrations and hands-on practice. The improvement is particularly relevant because product photography requires not only an understanding of photographic concepts but also the ability to translate those concepts into practical decisions regarding object placement, background, composition, and presentation. Previous community-service programs have similarly demonstrated that direct practice in product photography can strengthen MSME participants' practical capabilities, particularly when training involves smartphone-based photography and accessible supporting equipment (Indrashwara et al., 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2025). Gobang (2024) also reported improvements in participants' ability to capture and edit product images following training and mentoring in smartphone photography, including the application of angle techniques and simple studio arrangements.

The largest improvement occurred in participants' ability to photograph products independently using a smartphone, which increased from 58.89 in the pretest to 83.33 in the posttest, representing a gain of 24.44 points. This finding suggests that the training was particularly effective in developing participants' applied competency and confidence in using technology that was already available to them. Rather than requiring participants to rely on professional cameras or specialized equipment, the program enabled them to directly practice photography using their own smartphones, thereby reducing technological and financial barriers to continued application. Similar findings have been reported in smartphone-based product-photography programs, where hands-on activities, demonstrations, and mentoring contributed to improvements in participants' ability to create visual content independently for digital marketing (Gobang, 2024; Muafi et al., 2026). The greater improvement in practical competencies compared with initial knowledge indicators may indicate that experiential learning was particularly valuable in helping participants transform conceptual knowledge into observable skills. However, because the current evaluation focused on immediate pretest–posttest changes, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of improved training outcomes rather than definitive evidence of long-term changes in marketing performance or business revenue.

Overall, comparison of pretest and posttest scores showed a consistent upward trend across all indicators. The greater gains in practical skills than in knowledge suggest that the activity not only strengthened conceptual understanding but also improved participants' ability to apply smartphone-based product photography techniques. The overall comparison of pretest and posttest questionnaire results is presented in Figure 3.

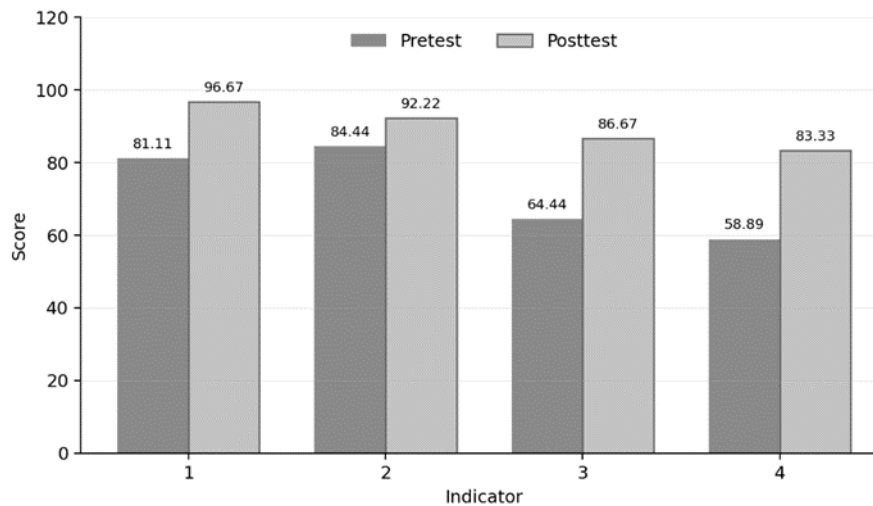


Figure 3. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Changes in skills were also evident in the documented visual outputs. Before the training, products were photographed in environments containing additional background elements that divided visual attention. After the training, several practice photographs showed more dominant product placement, simpler backgrounds, and more deliberate product arrangement. Figure 4 compares the visual presentation of product photographs before and after the training.



Figure 4. Comparison of Product Photographs Before and After the Training

Hands-on practice was a key component of the program implementation because it enabled participants to translate the concepts introduced during the training into directly applicable skills. Rather than relying solely on theoretical explanations, participants were guided to immediately practice product arrangement, background selection, lighting adjustment, composition, and image-capture techniques using products that were familiar to them. This practice-oriented approach allowed participants to identify and correct

technical problems during the learning process, including inappropriate lighting, distracting backgrounds, unbalanced composition, and improper camera positioning. Such an approach is consistent with previous community empowerment programs demonstrating that interactive workshops and direct practice can improve participants' understanding and technical competence in product photography (Indrashwara et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). Recent evidence also indicates that smartphone-based product photography training can strengthen participants' confidence and ability to produce more structured and visually appealing product images for digital marketing (Baihaqy et al., 2026). Thus, the practical component of the program was not merely an extension of the theoretical material but functioned as an essential mechanism for transforming knowledge into usable competencies.

The use of smartphones further enhanced the accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of the skills acquired through the program. Participants were able to practice with devices they already owned, eliminating the need for expensive dedicated cameras or sophisticated photographic equipment. This aspect is particularly relevant in community-based capacity-building programs, where technological accessibility and the ability to independently continue practicing after the intervention are important indicators of sustainability. The use of a simple mini studio also provided participants with an affordable means of controlling background, lighting, and product presentation without requiring substantial investment in professional equipment. Previous studies have similarly demonstrated that smartphone-based product photography can provide a practical and cost-effective solution for MSMEs seeking to improve their visual branding and digital marketing capabilities (Isnawati et al., 2022; Musdalifah et al., 2022; KN et al., 2025). Overall, the program addressed the partner community's priority problems at the basic capacity-building level by providing both conceptual understanding of the strategic role of product photography and practical skills for producing product images using readily available resources. The combination of hands-on learning, smartphone technology, and low-cost photographic facilities therefore created a feasible pathway for participants to continue developing their visual marketing competencies independently after the completion of the program..

CONCLUDING SECTIONS

Conclusion

Smartphone-based product-photography training for 20 members of the ribbon-embroidery community mentored by Lia Collection was implemented through introductory instruction, demonstration, practice, discussion, and evaluation. Based on the documented pretest and posttest results, all assessed indicators of understanding and skills improved, while post-training photographs showed more deliberate product presentation. The program therefore achieved its objective of strengthening participants' basic capacity in product photography.

Recommendations

Further training is recommended to integrate product design, packaging, and the use of photographs across digital marketing channels, in accordance with the development needs identified among the partner community. Future evaluations should also include post-

training monitoring of marketing indicators so that the relationship between improved visual skills and business performance can be assessed more objectively.

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