

Training on Using Canva to Create Promotional Content for Culinary Micro-Businesses

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Article History:

Received: 01-08-2026

Revised: 05-08-2026

Accepted: 11-08-2026

Keywords: Canva, Culinary, Micro Business, Promotional Content, Training

Abstract: Micro-culinary businesses are widely found in Indonesia, including in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City, and have significant potential for growth due to population increase and rising demand for food and beverages. However, preliminary observations revealed that these business owners primarily promote their products through social media using unedited photos, resulting in less attractive promotional content. This community service activity aims to provide training on using the Canva application to create more appealing promotional content for micro-culinary businesses. The training employed a combination of lecture, demonstration, hands-on practice, and mentoring methods, involving micro-culinary business owners as participants. The implementation included needs analysis, material preparation, training delivery, content creation mentoring, and evaluation through pre-test and post-test assessments. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' understanding and skills, evidenced by an increase in average scores from 44.1 in the pre-test to 81.6 in the post-test, representing a 37.5-point increase. All participants successfully produced at least one ready-to-use digital promotional content, and participant satisfaction levels were rated as very good. This activity proves that training based on simple design applications such as Canva can be an effective and relevant solution for enhancing the digital promotional capabilities of micro-culinary business owners with limited resources and graphic design skills.

Introduction

The micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector remains a fundamental pillar of Indonesia's economy, absorbing a significant share of the workforce and fostering inclusive growth. Among the various MSME categories, culinary microenterprises have demonstrated remarkable resilience and expansion, driven by steady population growth and a persistent rise in demand for food and beverages (Lubis, 2023; AlFariq, 2024). The digital transformation of business promotion has further accelerated opportunities for these enterprises, enabling them to reach broader audiences through social media platforms at minimal cost. However, the mere adoption of digital channels does not guarantee marketing effectiveness; the visual quality and persuasive power of promotional content have become decisive factors in capturing consumer attention in an increasingly saturated online marketplace (Sirajuddin & Wahditiya, 2024; Ixfina et al., 2023).

This phenomenon is clearly observable in the Ilir Barat I District of Palembang City, where culinary microenterprises such as home-based food stalls, snack shops, beverage outlets, and catering services proliferate. A preliminary observation by the community service team revealed that while most business owners already use social media applications like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook Marketplace for promotion, their content remains rudimentary. Photographs of products are often captured without adequate attention to lighting, composition, or branding, and no postproduction editing is applied. As a result, the promotional materials appear visually unappealing, fail to project a distinctive brand identity, and lose competitiveness against professionally designed content (Zulkarnain & Fauziyah, 2022; Pardede et al., 2024). This gap between the potential of digital promotion and its actual implementation underlines the urgent need for capacity building interventions tailored to the specific characteristics of culinary microentrepreneurs.

Previous studies have consistently highlighted Canva as an accessible graphic design tool suitable for nondesigners, including MSME actors with limited technical expertise and financial resources. Canva offers a free version with a vast library of templates, fonts, and visual elements that can be operated on smartphones, tablets, or personal computers (Isnaini et al., 2021; Kala'lembang et al., 2021). Several community service initiatives have demonstrated that training in Canva significantly improved participants' ability to create attractive promotional posters, social media feeds, and product catalogs. For example, Fahminnansih et al. (2021) reported that Islamic entrepreneurship schools successfully utilized Canva to enhance students' design skills for product promotion. Similarly, Damayanti et al. (2024) and Andivas et al. (2023) found that MSMEs could independently produce marketing materials after short term, hands-on workshops. These findings confirm the practical feasibility and immediate applicability of Canva-based training for small businesses.

However, a closer examination of the literature reveals two notable limitations. First, the majority of these training programs were conducted in educational settings or targeted general

MSME actors without differentiating by business sector, whereas culinary microenterprises face unique challenges in visually communicating taste, texture, and appetite appeal (Rahmawati, 2024; Mutiarachim & Tyoso, 2024). Second, many existing programs did not employ systematic pre and posttraining assessments to measure knowledge gains, nor did they evaluate participant satisfaction in a structured manner, leaving the effectiveness of the intervention largely anecdotal (Rini et al., 2024; Pardede et al., 2024). Moreover, no published study has specifically addressed the culinary microenterprise community in Ilir Barat I District of Palembang, a locale characterized by low initial graphic design literacy and a strong reliance on mobile-based social media promotion. These gaps highlight the absence of a localized, empirically evaluated training model that simultaneously addresses conceptual understanding, technical operations, and the production of ready-to-use promotional content.

Therefore, the present community service activity aims to fill this void by designing and implementing a comprehensive Canva training program for culinary microentrepreneurs in Ilir Barat I District. The specific objectives are threefold: (1) to enhance participants' understanding of basic digital content concepts and visual identity for promotion; (2) to improve operational skills in using Canva, including template selection, layout adjustment, and brand customization; and (3) to produce at least one finished promotional content piece per participant that can be immediately used for daily marketing. The urgency of this initiative lies in the pressing need for microenterprises to adopt low-cost, self-managed digital promotion strategies to survive in a competitive local market, especially as consumer behavior shifts towards visualcentric social media platforms. The novelty of this work resides in its integrated method combining lecture, live demonstration, hands-on practice, and personalized mentoring, implemented specifically for the culinary sector and rigorously evaluated through pretest/posttest comparisons and participant satisfaction surveys. By doing so, this study contributes both a replicable training framework for similar community contexts and practical solutions that directly empower microenterprises to elevate their digital promotional quality sustainably.

Research Methods

This community service activity was conducted in Lorok Pakjo Subdistrict, Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City, South Sumatra Province. In this subdistrict, there are micro-enterprises operating in the culinary sector with diverse product offerings. The implementation of the activity was carried out through several stages consisting of preparation, implementation, and mentoring phases.

The targets of this activity were micro-enterprise owners in the culinary sector located in Lorok Pakjo Subdistrict, Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City. The types of culinary businesses encountered included food stalls, snack kiosks, beverage outlets, and home-based catering services. The participants of the Canva training in this community service activity meet the following criteria: owning an operational and active culinary business, possessing a smartphone, tablet, or laptop with the ability to open the Canva application, and willingness to participate in the training and mentoring sessions.

The Canva training was implemented using the following methods:

- a. Lecture

Lecture and socialization were conducted to provide initial understanding regarding the importance of digital promotional content and basic concepts of visual design for micro-enterprises.

b. Demonstration

Demonstration involved the community service team providing direct examples of using the Canva application, including creating accounts, selecting templates, editing techniques, and downloading completed designs.

c. Practice

Direct practice allowed participants to create promotional content using their own devices with direct assistance from the community service team.

d. Mentoring

Mentoring involved providing guidance to micro-enterprise owners after the training by assisting participants in completing promotional content tailored to the specific needs of each culinary business.

e. Activity Evaluation

Activities were evaluated by administering a pre-test to determine the level of knowledge before training and a post-test after training to measure the extent of improvement in participants' understanding. Additionally, a satisfaction questionnaire was used to measure participants' responses to the implementation of the community service activity.

The stages of implementing the community service activity consist of:

a. First Stage: Preparation

This stage included location surveys, coordination with subdistrict/district officials and prospective participants, identification of training needs, and preparation of training modules and materials.

b. Second Stage: Training Implementation

This stage began with a pre-test to assess participants' abilities before training, which served as a baseline for comparison after training. Post-tests were administered following the delivery of materials, demonstrations of Canva usage, and practical sessions in creating promotional content.

c. Third Stage: Mentoring

During this stage, the community service team provided mentoring in completing promotional content designs according to the characteristics of each culinary product, including the selection of colors, logos, and promotional text.

d. Fourth Stage: Evaluation

This stage involved assessing results through post-tests and measuring the extent of improvement in participants' abilities resulting from the training.

The evaluation of outcomes was measured using the following indicators:

- a. Improvement in knowledge and skills from the training, measured from pre-test to post-test (serving as an indicator of increased participant understanding).
- b. Tangible outcomes from the training, specifically the production of at least one promotional content item for each participant's product.

- c. Participant satisfaction with the implementation of activities, measured using a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1-5.

Results and Discussion

A Canva training program was held to create promotional content for micro-enterprises in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City, South Sumatra. Culinary micro-enterprises, including food stalls, snack bars, beverage outlets, and home-based catering businesses, participated in the training. The community service team opened with a general overview of the need for digital promotional content for businesses, which will ultimately contribute to increased sales volume and future business sustainability.

The next stage involved a pre-test administered by the community service team to each participant, who was a culinary business owner. The pre-test was conducted to gauge their initial understanding of promotional content design concepts and the use of the Canva app. A post-test was then conducted after the training to determine the participants' skills improvement. The results showed that, in general, the participants lacked experience using Canva as a tool for creating and editing product promotions on their respective devices.

The training materials provided to participants were delivered in stages. The first stage was an introduction to the Canva interface, followed by account creation. The next stage covered how to create a design template and how to modify it, adding visual elements such as images, text, icons, and colors to suit the needs of the product and business, and finally, how to download and upload the results to the desired media. Each stage of the material was followed by a demonstration conducted by the service team and directly participated by each participant, namely culinary micro-entrepreneurs, using their respective devices.



Figure 1. Canva Training Activities

The training participants were intensively supervised by a team of community service personnel in creating promotional content tailored to the needs of culinary micro-entrepreneurs. The training included creating food menu posters, promotional players, and daily social media post templates. The culinary micro-entrepreneurs received personal support, as their initial skills in using the Canva app varied, and some had never used Canva before.

Participants' understanding was evaluated by comparing the results of pre-tests and post-tests administered before and after the training. A summary of the evaluation results is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test

Assessment Indicators	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average	Improvement
Understanding the concept of promotional content design	52.4	84.6	32.2
Ability to operate basic Canva features	38.7	81.3	42.6
Ability to customize templates to your business identity	41.1	78.9	37.8
Average	44.1	81.6	37.5

Based on the results of the pre-test and post-test, the participants' scores experienced a fairly significant increase in all indicators of the assessment given after the training, with an average increase of 37 points. The increase occurred in each item and the highest was in the ability to operate Canva's basic features, which was initially only 38.7 and after the training increased to 81.3, resulting in an increase of 42.6 points. Then followed by the item on the ability to customize templates with business identity at the beginning of 41.1 points and after the training increased to 78.9 points and an increase of 37.8 points. Meanwhile, the item on understanding the concept of promotional content design was the highest at the beginning among the others, namely 52.4 points and after the training became 84.6 points, resulting in an increase of 32.2 points. Based on the results of the pre-test and post-test, it shows that the demonstration approach along with direct practice is quite effective in equipping participants with technical skills that have not been previously used by the training participants.

Based on the promotional content products produced, it was found that during the practical and mentoring sessions, each training participant successfully created at least one digital promotional content that could be used for the marketing needs of each culinary micro-business actor. The products created by the participants were digital posters of the products provided, then promotional players with set prices and discounts if any. In addition, training participants were also able to create and complete business profiles in the form of banners and create templates for daily content uploads for their social media such as WhatsApp business, Instagram and also marketplaces and reels on Facebook.



Figure 2. Example of a Player created by a Training Participant

The results were also known from the evaluation of participant satisfaction known from a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1-5 about the Canva training for promotion consisting of material benefits for participants, clarity of the service team in providing information, the suitability of the training method, and participants' desire to apply the training results to their respective businesses. The evaluation results showed that the level of satisfaction from the training participants was in the very good category and the majority of training participants stated that the material presented was easy to understand and suited to the promotional needs of their business.

Overall, participants expressed their desire to continue using Canva personally without experiencing any difficulties in creating content to promote their products in their daily lives. Participants also noted that this activity has significantly increased their digital knowledge of promotions through content creation using Canva. The perceived impact is better content and the drive to improve culinary product promotions.

Discussion of Activity Results

The results of the team's community service activities indicate that Canva training positively impacted the understanding and skills of culinary micro-entrepreneurs in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City, in creating digital promotional content. These findings align with similar community service activities, which also report improved design skills among culinary micro-entrepreneurs after Canva training, particularly in product design and promotional media.

The community service method, which combined lectures, demonstrations, hands-on practice, and mentoring, proved effective in addressing participants' limited technological capabilities. The culinary micro-entrepreneurs in Ilir Barat I District encountered by the community service team generally had non-technical backgrounds. Personal mentoring during the practical sessions was a crucial factor in helping participants, who initially lacked knowledge, gain additional knowledge and skills after the training to complete the creation of digital promotional content tailored to their respective business needs.

The community service team also identified several challenges encountered during the implementation of the program. These limitations included limited internet access at the training location and varying levels of digital literacy skills among participants. These challenges were important for the community service team to consider when designing further mentoring strategies, such as establishing

independent study groups or providing regular online mentoring, to ensure the skills acquired by participants could be continuously applied and developed.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The community service activity in the form of Canva training for creating promotional content for micro-culinary businesses in Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City, has been successfully implemented and provided significant positive impacts for the participants. The main findings demonstrated an improvement in participants' understanding and skills, evidenced by the increase in average scores from the pre-test (44.1) to the post-test (81.6), representing an increase of 37.5 points, with the highest improvement observed in the ability to operate basic Canva features at 42.6 points. All participants successfully produced at least one ready-to-use digital promotional content, and the participant satisfaction level was rated as very good. This activity proves that training based on simple design applications such as Canva, utilizing a combination of lecture, demonstration, hands-on practice, and mentoring methods, is effective in enhancing the digital promotional capabilities of micro-culinary business owners. Nevertheless, this activity has several limitations, including the relatively short training duration that prevents in-depth coverage of all Canva features, the absence of long-term evaluation regarding the sustainability of Canva utilization by participants, internet connectivity constraints at the training venue that affects the smoothness of practice sessions, and the varying levels of digital literacy among participants that necessitated individual approaches. Future research is recommended to develop periodic follow-up mentoring programs, both face-to-face and online, to ensure the sustainability of training outcomes, as well as to conduct advanced training covering product photography, video content creation, social media optimization, and the utilization of more complex Canva features to further enhance the effectiveness of digital promotion for micro-culinary businesses.

Acknowledge

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to all parties who contributed to the successful implementation of this community service activity. Special thanks are addressed to the micro-culinary business owners in Lorok Pakjo Subdistrict, Ilir Barat I District, Palembang City, who participated enthusiastically as trainees throughout the Canva training program. The authors also extend their deepest appreciation to the subdistrict and village officials for their invaluable support, coordination, and facilitation, which enabled the smooth execution of the training activities from the preparation stage through to the mentoring and evaluation phases. Furthermore, the authors acknowledge the dedication and hard work of all team members who contributed their time, expertise, and efforts in delivering the training materials, providing technical assistance, and ensuring that every participant could successfully create promotional content for their businesses. This activity would not have been possible without the collective commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders involved.

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