Boosting Online Visibility and Brand Awareness for Tarahan Village MSMEs via Google Business Profile and Hands-On Digital Literacy Support

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Abstract: *This program set out to help micro and small enterprises in Tarahan Village, South Lampung become easier to find, understand, and contact online by strengthening their Google Business Profile (GBP) presence and everyday branding habits. The core challenge was low discoverability on search/maps, inconsistent brand identity, and limited practical digital skills that kept market reach narrow despite growing internet use. Guided by brand salience and digital discoverability concepts (i.e., making the brand easier to notice, recognize, and retrieve in local search moments), we used a participatory, hands-on design: a rapid needs scan, co-designed training modules, live GBP demonstrations, guided implementation on each participant's profile, and short-cycle follow-ups. This intervention combines GBP optimization with live mentoring and cultural storytelling, a rarely combined method in rural MSME digital capacity building, constituting the study's novelty. Capacity gains were measured with pre/post tests, while profile progress and customer intent were tracked using GBP Insights (views, direction clicks, calls). After the training, participants claimed and completed their listings (core fields, photos, first posts) and activated reviews/messaging. Over May–October 2025, Insights recorded 88 views and 64 interaction events, mostly direction requests (61), with a September peak. Knowledge and confidence rose by ~17–22 points for every participant, indicating effective transfer of skills such as posting, photo curation, review replies, and reading Insights. We conclude that a lightweight, GBP-centered intervention—explicitly designed to heighten brand salience and reduce search friction—can deliver early, measurable gains in local discovery and establish routines to sustain them, with constraints (device/network variability and verification delays) manageable through periodic troubleshooting and shared visual assets.*

Keywords: *MSMEs; online visibility; brand awareness; Google Business Profile (GBP); digital literacy; digital marketing.*

BACKGROUND

Digital transformation has opened real, practical doors for MSMEs: markets can be reached farther, promotion costs can be managed more efficiently, and communication with customers becomes more immediate. Indonesia has the right conditions for this shift, internet access keeps expanding and users are increasingly active, an opportunity too valuable to miss (APJII, 2020; BPS, 2020). Yet in rural contexts, this potential does not automatically translate into marketing performance. The bottlenecks are deceptively simple but decisive: limited digital literacy, uneven infrastructure, and sporadic brand management. This case is evident among MSMEs in Tarahan Village, South Lampung, including the partner Sanggar Tapis Rakata, where brand identity has not been nurtured consistently and digital channels are not managed with a clear cadence, keeping "discoverability" low.

Figure 1. Tapis, a typical product from Tarahan Village

Theory points to a straightforward pathway: when a business is easy to find online, the likelihood of visits and interactions rises (Drèze & Zufryden, 2004). Within brand equity, brand awareness is the gateway; people must first recognize before they evaluate and eventually purchase (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Azzari & Pelissari, 2020; Elsubbaugh & Rashad, 2025). The digital environment amplifies this mechanism because reputation and social proof are formed in public view: reviews, comments, and social conversations can lift or dampen purchase intent (Shmargad & Watts, 2016; Chen et al., 2022; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). Research in interactive marketing further shows a positive link between a well-managed online presence (consistent presence, visibility, and reputation) and the ability to attract high-value customers (Cioppi et al., 2019).

For local discovery, Google Business Profile (GBP), formerly Google My Business, functions as a "storefront" directly connected to Google Search and Google Maps. Community-service practice and training evidence suggest that once the profile is claimed, completed, enriched with photos and posts, and its reviews are handled ethically, customer interactions tend to increase (Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025). In Tarahan, the issue is not product quality, tapis textiles and local crafts carry strong cultural value, but the lack of disciplined management of digital channels and brand storytelling. Many MSMEs lack a content SOP, do not set a posting rhythm, or have yet to use "Insights" metrics to read search behavior. Meanwhile, experience with structured, hands-on training shows that practical skills tied to daily tasks, completing the profile, uploading fit-for-purpose photos, writing clear descriptions, and responding to reviews, can boost tool adoption and productivity (Yuningsih et al., 2024).

Grounded in this reality, the GBP-based intervention in Tarahan focuses on four moves: (1) completing and standardizing profile information so the business is easier to find; (2) building a disciplined content routine with cultural storytelling (tapis) to stay relevant for local search; (3) activating interaction channels—reviews, messages, calls—and responding quickly and ethically; and (4) using Insights data to decide which content to publish and when it should go live. The approach aims for tangible shifts along the marketing funnel: from search/Maps views to direction clicks and meaningful interactions, while strengthening the local MSME brand equity and contributing to SDG-8, SDG-9, and SDG-17 (APJII, 2020; BPS, 2020; Drèze & Zufryden, 2004; Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014; Cioppi et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2022; Qiu & Zhang, 2024; Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025; Yuningsih et al., 2024). While GBP optimization has been explored in urban MSMEs, few studies or community-service models focus on rural entrepreneurs with cultural products. Most training programs separate technical setup from branding

strategy. This program bridges both through hands-on mentoring, storytelling integration, and routine-based support.

METHOD
Overall approach and service-design steps

This community program followed a participatory–collaborative service design that combines structured training with hands-on mentoring and iterative follow-ups. The workflow comprised five linked steps: (1) rapid needs assessment through observation and brief interviews with MSME owners; (2) co-design of the training modules and checklists (branding basics, Google Business Profile/GBP claiming and completion, photo and post standards, review management, and use of Insights); (3) conduct a pre-test on participants; (4) interactive training with live demonstrations, guided implementation on participants' own devices and profiles; and (5) short-cycle monitoring and reflection sessions to lock in practice.
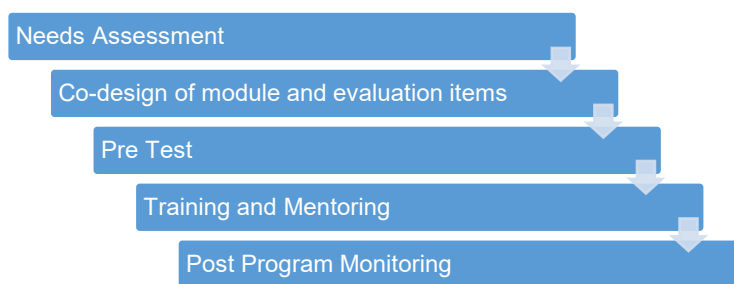

Figure 2. Workflow in community program

The design intentionally placed discovery and practice in the same session so that participants could translate concepts into concrete actions the same day— claiming a profile, uploading photos, writing a clear description, and testing a first post. The approach is consistent with evidence that visibility is a precursor to traffic and conversion, and that brand awareness scaffolds recognition and purchase intention— hence the emphasis on completeness and consistency of profile information and content cadence (Drèze & Zufryden, 2004; Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014). Given the program's focus on local discovery, GBP was used as the "front door" to Search and Maps, a tactic supported by prior community-training reports showing gains in reach and customer interactions after basic optimization (Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025).

The pre-/post-test instrument was developed collaboratively through a co-design workshop involving facilitators and MSME participants, guided by existing literature on digital skills assessment and small-enterprise training (e.g., Yuningsih et al., 2024; Cioppi et al., 2019). Each item was derived from the practical competencies targeted in the Google Business Profile (GBP) modules—claiming and verifying the profile, completing mandatory fields, uploading photos, creating posts, managing reviews, and reading Insights. These items were framed as short, action-oriented statements to capture both knowledge and self-reported confidence in performing each task, following principles of task-based instruction (Ellis, 2003), where learning is anchored in the completion of meaningful, real-world tasks.

The broader design of this intervention was inspired by experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), emphasizing iterative cycles of doing and reflecting. Training sessions were structured to allow participants to observe live demonstrations (see), replicate the steps on their own devices (do), and discuss outcomes with mentors

(reflect). This approach integrated practical skill transfer with immediate feedback, ensuring that participants not only learned how to optimize their GBP but also internalized daily branding routines such as posting cadence, photo curation, and customer engagement.

Target community and roles of partners

The target community was MSMEs in Tarahan Village, South Lampung, with a focus on the partner Sanggar Tapis Rakata and several peer artisans operating micro-enterprises in textiles and crafts. Participants were recruited through the village apparatus and the partner's network to ensure relevance and commitment. In total, fifteen MSME owners attended core activities and received direct mentoring, representing key product categories and different levels of digital readiness . The village government provided the venue, basic logistics, and local coordination; the academic team (lecturers and student facilitators) designed the modules, delivered the training, and offered in-room and post-session mentoring; the MSME partner acted as the "anchor case," allowing the class to learn from a live profile while keeping examples context-specific. This tri-partite structure (village, university, MSMEs) ensured both ownership and continuity beyond the training day.

The number of facilitators was calibrated to maintain a low participant-to-mentor ratio during hands-on segments, which is critical when tasks involve device-level operations (sign-in, verification, media upload). The collaborative arrangement also simplified documentation for follow-up and monitoring (attendance, checklists, and screenshots of profile progress), creating a shared evidence base to support incremental improvements after the formal sessions. The training structure draws on experiential learning principles, enabling participants to 'see–do–reflect' within the same session.

Overview of knowledge and technology transferred

The core technology introduced was Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business) as a lightweight, high-leverage tool for local discovery and customer interaction. The transfer bundle covered: profile claiming and verification; completing canonical fields (name, category, address, hours, phone, links); writing concise, benefit-oriented descriptions; photo standards (composition, lighting, file size); post formats (what's new, offers, events); review and message handling with ethical guidelines; and reading GBP Insights to inform content and timing . Branding fundamentals were woven through each task (visual consistency, cultural storytelling, and simple copywriting) to raise brand salience in search contexts, aligning with established links between awareness, preference, and intention (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Azzari & Pelissari, 2020). Prior practice-based studies and service programs have found that basic GBP optimization can lift discoverability and interactions, reinforcing the choice of GBP as the first "digital storefront" for MSMEs (Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025). To sustain adoption, the team shared ready-to-use SOPs and micro-checklists (weekly posting cadence, monthly photo refresh, 24-hour review response, quarterly description audit) plus a minimal content calendar template. This bundle balances quick wins (claim, photos, first post) with habits that compound over time (consistent posts and review responses), echoing prior evidence that hands-on, task-level training improves day-to-day tool use and productivity (Yuningsih et al., 2024).

Instruments, data collection, indicators, and analysis

Instruments included: (a) training slides and step-by-step worksheets; (b) a pre-/post-test assessing knowledge and confidence for core tasks (claiming, completing

fields, posting, photo curation, review replies, reading Insights); (c) implementation checklists completed during mentoring; and (d) GBP dashboards (Insights screenshots) to capture view, direction click, call, and website click trends. Data were collected at three points: baseline (pre-test and initial profile audit), day-of implementation (checklists and mentor notes), and short-cycle follow-up (post-test and GBP metrics). Success indicators blended capacity and performance: (1) learning gains between pre- and post-test; (2) profile completeness milestones (verified, fields filled, photos, first post); (3) content cadence (weekly posts, monthly photo refresh); and (4) interaction metrics (views, direction clicks, calls) over the observation window. The pre/post instruments were co-developed through a facilitator–participant workshop involving the outreach team and MSME owners, using task mapping, cognitive walkthroughs, and rapid piloting to ensure content validity, local relevance (language, examples, and constraints), and alignment with the exact GBP skills taught.

Analysis proceeded in two layers. First, descriptive comparison of pre/post scores to quantify learning effects, consistent with prior evidence that structured, task-focused training lifts adoption and productivity (Yuningsih et al., 2024). Second, simple trend reading of GBP Insights to interpret whether improved profile hygiene and content routines coincided with increases in discoverability and intent signals—an expected pathway given the documented link between visibility, awareness, and downstream behaviors (Drèze & Zufryden, 2004; Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Profile optimization and early traction

Following the workshop, partner MSMEs successfully claimed and completed their Google Business Profile (GBP) listings, filling canonical fields, uploading initial product/location photos, and publishing first posts. Within the May–October 2025 observation window, Insights recorded 88 views across Search/Maps and 64 interaction events, dominated by direction requests (61) and website clicks (3), with a noticeable peak in September 2025. The practical takeaway is straightforward: completeness and recency made the profiles more findable for intent-rich, local searches, while photos and posts supplied quick evidence of activity and product relevance. Because discovery and action occur in the same interface (Maps buttons to call or get directions), even modest hygiene improvements translated into measurable intent signals. This is consistent with the service design choice to put "discovery + practice" in the same day, participants left the room with verified profiles, live photos, and at least one post in place .
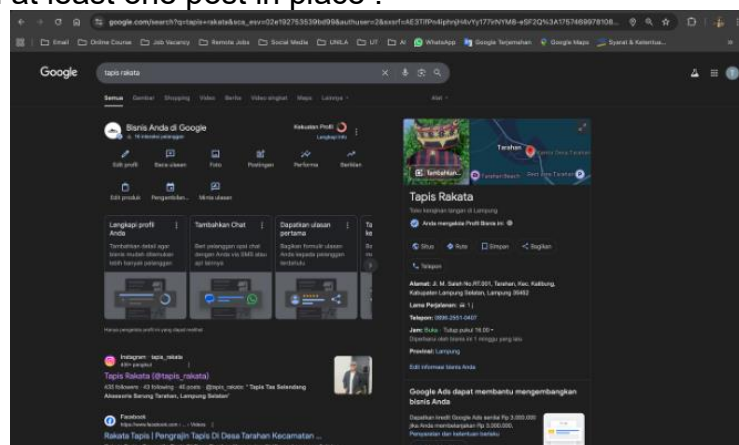

Figure 3. Google Business Profile Personalized View Tapis Rakata

Empirically and theoretically, the pattern matches a well-documented path: visibility is a precursor to traffic, and traffic feeds the funnel toward consideration and purchase (Drèze & Zufryden, 2004). In brand-equity terms, awareness and availability heuristics increase the odds of recognition and favorable evaluation in search contexts (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014). Studies on online presence similarly link consistent profile hygiene with higher perceived professionalism and the ability to attract high-value customers (Cioppi et al., 2019). Prior community-based trainings on GBP show comparable gains after basic optimization, once a listing is claimed, completed, and maintained with photos and posts, both discovery and customer interactions typically rise (Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025). The Tarahan figures thus sit comfortably within the expected effect range for first-wave optimizations on small local listings.
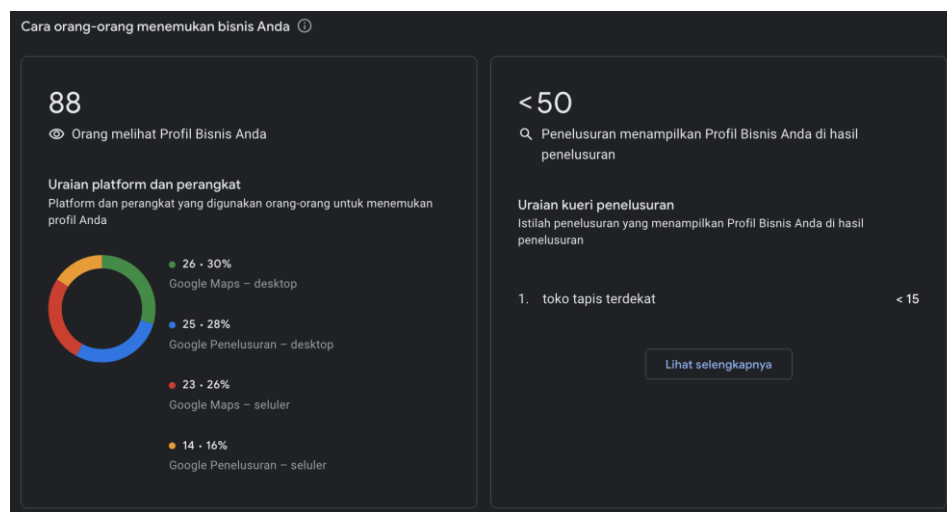

Figure 4. Tapis Rakata's online visibility performance

To contextualize our outcomes, Table 1 contrasts the Tarahan intervention with prior GBP trainings. Erstiawan et al. (2023) delivered online sessions (Google Meet) and documented a sharp view spike for one F&B participant, from 137 to 621 views within ~1–2 months, suggesting that rapid exposure gains are possible even without in-person mentoring. Puspitasari et al. (2024) used presentation, Q&A, and hands-on practice but reported no post-training outcome evaluation, limiting effect inference. Iskandar (2025) combined training, mentoring, and M&E and found a positive visibility effect, with a 7-day average of 64 profile views (range: 5 to a peak of 137 for a culinary UMKM optimizing descriptions, photos, and hours). In contrast, the Tarahan cohort (rural, cultural MSMEs) showed a more interaction-heavy pattern: over May–October 2025 we observed 88 total views (≈18/month) alongside 64 interaction events, predominantly direction requests (61), signals of offline visit intent. We attribute this high intent ratio to our anchor-case + checklist design, which couples live demonstration with routine reinforcement (posting cadence, photo refresh, review replies). While our absolute views were lower than the urban spikes reported elsewhere, the quality of engagement (directions > clicks) indicates that pairing GBP hygiene with mentoring and cultural storytelling can translate visibility into real-world footfall intent more reliably than lecture-style formats.

Table 1. Comparison of Tarahan GBP Intervention and Prior Training Studies

Study / Program	Context & Participants	Method / Delivery	Observation Window	Reported Evaluation / Evidence	Headline Result	Notes / Distinctive Features
Erstiawan et al. (2023)	UMKM Food & Beverage (urban/online)	Online training via Google Meet	~1–2 months (pre–post snapshot)	Documented view increase for one participant	Views rose 137 → 621	Exposure spike after online sessions; limited mentoring depth reported
Puspitasari et al. (2024)	Mixed UMKM (semi-urban, crafts)	Presentation + Q&A + practice on GMB features	Not specified	No post-training evaluation reported	—	Implementation focus; effect size not measurable
Iskandar (2025)	Mixed UMKM (urban)	Training + Mentoring + M&E	7-day analytics summary (plus peaks)	Positive impact on digital visibility	Average 64 views / 7 days; peak 137, lowest 5 (underuse of interactive features)	Stronger results when descriptions, photos, and hours are optimized
This Study (Tarahan, 2025)	Rural cultural MSMEs (tapis, crafts)	Anchor case + hands-on + checklist + mentoring	Sept–Oct 2025 (~1 months)	Pre/post tests + GBP Insights	88 total views (~18/month); 64 interactions, mostly direction requests (61)	High intent pattern; routines (posting, photo refresh, review replies); cultural storytelling integrated

Capacity building and practical skill gains

Learning outcomes improved across all participants: pre–post scores rose by ~17–22 points with no declines, indicating that core operational skills, claiming, completing fields, curating photos, drafting posts, responding to reviews, and reading Insights were transferred effectively. The low trainee-to-mentor ratio during hands-on segments was decisive; most bottlenecks were device-level (sign-in, verification, image compression), so immediate troubleshooting preserved momentum. Co-designing checklists and having the anchor MSME as a live case also reduced abstraction: everyone could watch a profile evolve, then mirror the same steps on their own listings. This "see–do–reflect" rhythm helped translate instruction into routine.

Figure 5. Brand Visibility and Awareness Training for MSMEs

The result aligns with practice-oriented evidence that micro-skills tied to daily tasks increase tool adoption and productivity among small firms (Yuningsih et al., 2024). From a branding lens, improved operational capacity is not cosmetic, it enables the repetition needed to build brand salience over time (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014). As participants internalize posting cadence and message handling, they accumulate the "touches" that move customers along the path from awareness to intention (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Azzari & Pelissari, 2020). The Tarahan cohort mirrors prior community trainings where short, guided cycles produced immediate capability jumps that persisted into follow-up periods (Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025), reinforcing the choice of hands-on design.
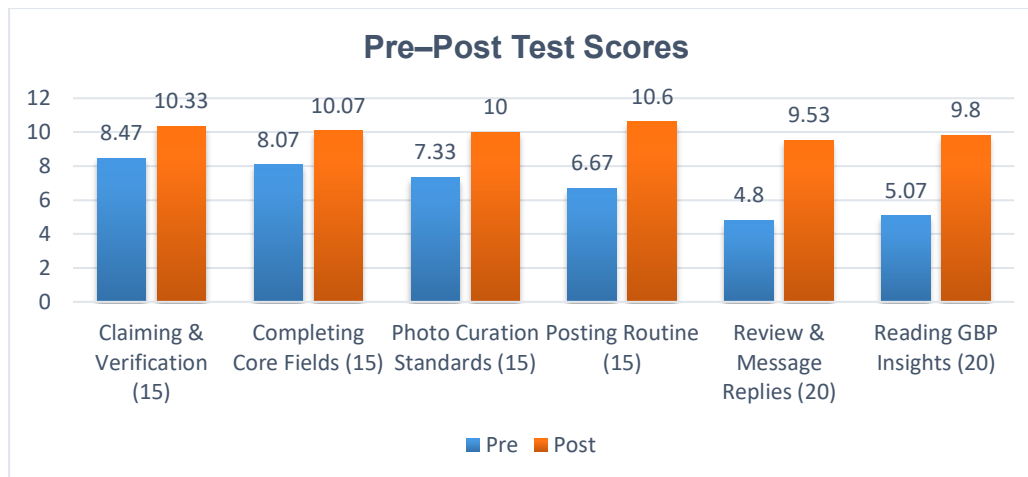

Figure 6. Pre–Post Test Scores by Participant

Across the six subcomponents, participants showed clear and consistent pre–post gains, confirming that the hands-on design translated into practical skills. Foundational tasks such as Claiming & Verification and Completing Core Fields rose from roughly the high-7s/low-8s to about 10–10.3 (out of 15), suggesting a ceiling effect once profiles were properly claimed and completed. More process-heavy skills posted the largest jumps: Review & Message Replies and Reading GBP Insights nearly doubled from about 5 to ~9.5–9.8 (out of 20), indicating that trainees learned to request authentic reviews, respond promptly, and read basic performance signals. Likewise, Posting Routine and Photo Curation Standards moved from the 6–7 range to ~10–10.6 (out of 15), reflecting adoption of a simple weekly cadence and better visual hygiene. These component-level improvements mirror the individual totals (each participant gained 17–22 points with no declines), and together they show a coherent capability lift: quick wins on setup tasks, plus substantial advances in the behaviors that sustain visibility and convert searchers into store visits (views → direction clicks → calls).

Review and messaging activation

Another visible change was the activation and early use of reviews and direct messages on GBP . Participants learned to request legitimate reviews after transactions and to respond within 24 hours, acknowledging feedback and clarifying product details. Even a small number of authentic reviews can materially influence local searchers who are deciding whether to visit a physical micro-enterprise; the response practice, in turn, signals reliability. Messaging also helped close gaps common to micro-retail (inconsistent hours, stock queries, custom orders). Over the

monitoring window, partners reported more precise inquiries rather than generic interest, suggesting that listings plus reviews were pre-qualifying demand and saving time.
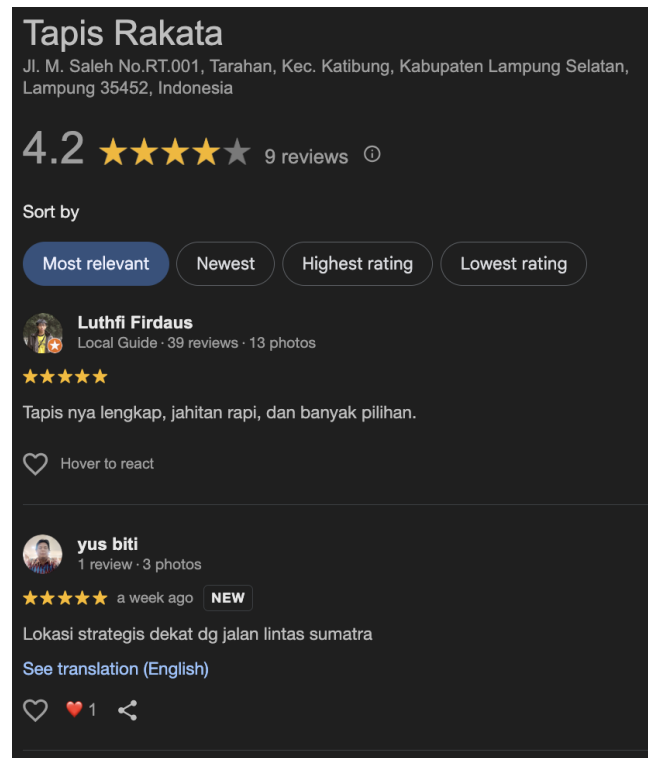

Figure 7. Tapis Rakata on Google: Reviews Snapshot

This pattern is consistent with evidence that social proof, especially review valence and recency shapes purchase intention (Chen et al., 2022; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). In networked environments, high visibility can either amplify or suppress interaction depending on perceived authenticity and the firm's responsiveness; managed well, it encourages constructive engagement (Shmargad & Watts, 2016). The Tarahan experience lines up with studies where basic review hygiene (asking ethically, replying promptly) improves perceived trust and reduces uncertainty pre-visit, particularly in low-information categories such as crafts and micro-retail . The difference from larger-scale e-commerce is that a single authentic review can carry disproportionate weight for hyperlocal searches, making early practices especially impactful.

Content cadence and cultural storytelling

Participants adopted simple content routines: weekly posts highlighting products, short behind-the-scenes clips, and periodic photo refreshes emphasizing the cultural value of tapis and local craftsmanship . The mix aimed to balance utility (hours, location, offers) with meaning (heritage narrative) so that listings felt both informative and distinctive. Over time, posts that combined a clear product shot with a one-sentence "why it matters" message tended to generate more taps and saves, hinting that cultural cues help users remember and later retrieve the brand. The routine also made it easier to coordinate with offline moments (village events, small exhibitions), giving the content calendar real-world anchors.
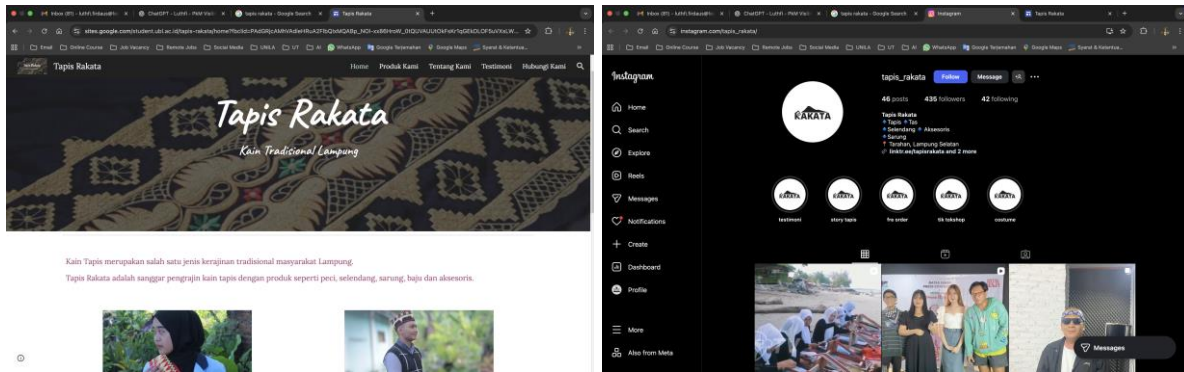
Figure 8. Website (google site) and Instagram display of Tapis Rakata

The approach resonates with theory linking awareness and attitude formation: salience grows with repeated, coherent cues that tie the brand to a specific benefit or identity (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Rossiter, 2014). Empirical work shows that brand awareness, when coupled with relevant associations, relates positively to market outcomes and intention (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Azzari & Pelissari, 2020; Elsubbaugh & Rashad, 2025). In community settings, prior GBP-focused programs also report that consistent, on-brand visuals and short, benefit-oriented copy outperform sporadic posts (Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025). Tarahan's emphasis on cultural storytelling is a contextual extension of these findings heritage cues provide memorable "hooks" in otherwise crowded local search results .

Best practice and SDG contributions

Three practices stand out as replicable: (1) use of GBP Insights to time posts and prioritize content types that correlate with direction clicks; and (1) an anchor case method where one MSME's live profile becomes the classroom. Together, these produced visible gains with limited resources. In SDG terms, the package supports SDG-8 (productive micro-enterprise activity), SDG-9 (digital infrastructure use at the last mile), and SDG-17 (university–village–MSME partnership).

Constraints and boundary conditions

Key constraints were largely outside the team's control: device heterogeneity (older phones, limited storage), variable network quality, and occasional verification delays (e.g., postcard timing) that slowed initial claiming . Seasonality and event-driven demand also influenced Insights trends, complicating attribution in short windows. Photo quality varied across participants, affecting the perceived professionalism of listings until curated sets were provided. These constraints are typical in rural MSME programs and should be anticipated rather than read as implementation weaknesses (Erstiawan et al., 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2024; Iskandar, 2025). Mitigations used (shared photo kits, offline-first worksheets, and extended office-hours mentoring) helped keep progress steady despite the frictions.

CONCLUSION

The program met its central aim: helping Tarahan's MSMEs become easier to find, clearer to understand, and more responsive to customers in channels that matter locally. By pairing structured instruction with hands-on mentoring, participants left not only with verified and complete Google Business Profiles but also with the routines

needed to keep them alive, regular posts, refreshed photos, and timely review replies. Gains in knowledge and confidence were visible in pre–post results and were reflected in early intent signals on GBP (views, direction requests, calls), suggesting that better "profile hygiene" and simple content discipline can nudge users from discovery to action. Importantly, these changes did not require complex tools: the anchor MSME case, micro-checklists, and quick troubleshooting proved sufficient to convert concepts into daily practice, consistent with prior evidence that task-level training boosts adoption and productivity in small enterprises.

Beyond immediate outputs, the intervention offers a workable template for similar rural settings: start with a single, high-leverage storefront (GBP), embed brand storytelling in every step, and use Insights to learn what content and timing actually move people. While connectivity and device constraints set the pace of early progress, the university–village–MSME partnership created enough continuity to keep momentum. In that sense, the program did more than "optimize profiles"; it put in place small, repeatable habits that grow visibility, trust, and, ultimately, opportunity aligned with the local development spirit and the broader SDG agenda .

RECOMMENDATION

To sustain and scale the gains, we recommend institutionalizing a few small, repeatable habits that compound over time: keep a minimal SOP—weekly posts, a monthly photo refresh, <24-hour replies to reviews and messages, and a quarterly profile audit—so better "profile hygiene" consistently converts visibility into action (views → direction clicks). Normalize ethical review practices by requesting only authentic, post-purchase feedback and replying with a simple "thank—clarify—invite" pattern to build trust and pre-qualify local demand. Read Google Business Profile Insights monthly to choose posting day/hour, refresh assets older than 90 days, and test one change at a time; carry forward what correlates with direction clicks . Raise visual and copy standards through a shared photo kit, quarterly "shoot days," and brief, benefit-led descriptions with cultural hooks (tapis) that aid recall in local search. Anticipate constraints, device/network variability, verification delays, seasonality and mitigate with quarterly office hours, pre-curated image sets, and reading Insights alongside the village events calendar.

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