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Digital Marketing Transformation of Islamic Boarding School-Based Businesses through TikTok Social Media Strategic Assistance at IZZI Bakery

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***Abstract*:**
Digital transformation is a strategic need for pesantren-based businesses to expand marketing reach, strengthen brand identity, and support institutional economic independence. This study aims to describe the process of strategic assistance of TikTok social media at IZZI Bakery and analyze changes in the use of digital media in marketing activities. The research uses a qualitative method with a Community Service (PkM) approach based on *Participatory Action Research* (PAR), which is carried out through problem identification, action planning, mentoring, observation, evaluation, and reflection. Data is collected through participatory observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed in a qualitative descriptive manner. The results of the study show a shift from conventional promotions that rely on *word of mouth* and local customers to a more structured use of TikTok through account creation, brand identity strengthening, and the production of visual promotional content. Mentoring also increases the understanding and capacity of managers in utilizing social media as a means of marketing communication. These findings confirm that participatory mentoring can be the foundation for strengthening digital marketing capacity and supporting the economic independence of pesantren businesses in a sustainable manner.

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing transformation increasingly determines the ability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (UMKM) to maintain market relevance, especially when consumers are increasingly accustomed to obtaining product information through digital channels. For businesses that develop in the pesantren ecosystem, marketing digitalization not only serves as a promotional instrument, but can also be part of a strategy to strengthen institutional economic independence. The use of social media allows businesses with limited resources to expand market communication, build brand identity, and introduce products without completely relying on local consumer networks. Studies on the digitalization of pesantren UMKM show that online marketing strategies can support the expansion of product reach and improve business performance, while digital marketing assistance in the pesantren environment is also directed at improving managers' skills in utilizing technology and strengthening business competitiveness(Surya & Raharjo, 2025). From the perspective of Sharia Business Management, this development is important because strengthening marketing capacity can go hand in hand with the development of a business that is responsible,

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sustainability-oriented, and still pays attention to the characteristics of the economic value of Islamic boarding schools.

In this context, TikTok has a strategic position because its video-content-oriented characteristics allow business actors to convey product information in a visual, concise, and interactive manner. The use of this platform does not stop at the dissemination of information, but has the potential to shape *Brand Identity*, improve *Brand Awareness*, and open access to consumers outside of their existing market network. A literature review on TikTok as an MSME marketing strategy shows that the content distribution characteristics on the platform provide opportunities for small businesses to gain a wider audience reach and increase brand awareness(Setiawan, 2025). However, the existence of digital platforms does not automatically result in marketing transformation if business actors do not have the ability to create content, manage accounts, understand audience characteristics, and maintain publication consistency. Therefore, digital transformation needs to be understood as a change in organizational capacity and human resources, not just a transfer of promotional media. This perspective makes strategic assistance relevant in the development of pesantren businesses because technology needs to be translated into operational skills that can be maintained by partners after the service program ends.

This problem was clearly found in IZZI Bakery, a business unit located in the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School, Probolinggo Regency. Based on initial observations, IZZI Bakery's marketing activities are still dominated by conventional patterns through direct sales to regular customers, the surrounding community, and the pesantren environment. In these initial conditions, IZZI Bakery does not have an official TikTok account managed as a promotional medium, so information about products still relies heavily on direct communication and *word of mouth*. This condition limits business opportunities to expand market reach and build a digital identity that can be recognized by potential consumers. These problems do not only show the limitations of the use of technology, but also illustrate the need to strengthen the capacity of human resources in managing digital marketing activities. Thus, the necessary intervention is not only the provision of a platform, but a mentoring process that helps partners understand, practice, and manage digital media according to business needs.

A number of previous studies have shown that MSME marketing problems can be overcome through strengthening digital marketing combined with an empowerment approach. (Oktara et al., 2025), for example, using *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) to overcome the weaknesses of marketing and MSME institutions through education and the implementation of digital marketing. These results show that marketing strengthening needs to be linked to an action process that directly involves partners, not just knowledge delivery. (Kamariani et al., 2025; Basofitrah, et al., 2026) also shows that the PAR approach can be used in the process of transforming MSME marketing from conventional patterns to the use of digital media by involving business actors in service activities. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, (Awa et al., 2024) found that digital marketing training can improve the skills of UMKM in using technology to expand market coverage while still paying attention to halal principles, while (Kusairi & Abady, 2024) shows that the digitalization program in Islamic boarding school UMKM can support business development and performance. These findings provide the basis that marketing digitalization has strong relevance to the pesantren economic empowerment agenda.

Previous research has also begun to lead to more applicative assistance in the use of social media. (Susilo et al., 2022) use PAR in assisting digital marketing and the legality of MSME businesses by placing participation, research, and action as a unit of the change process. Research (Hidayatullah & Saresti, 2026) then integrate the strategy *Branding*, digital marketing, training, mentoring, and evaluation in pesantren based UMKM to increase product competitiveness. Meanwhile, studies on TikTok show that the platform is increasingly positioned as a strategic instrument in MSME marketing, not just a communication medium (Pearl, 2025). However, some studies still place digital training as the main intervention, while the process of changing managers' ability to develop content strategies and maintain account management after mentoring has not always been the main focus(Ramadhani, 2025). This gap is increasingly important in the context of pesantren business because the success of digitalization is not only determined by the availability of media, but also by the sustainability of the capacity of human resources who manage it.

Based on this synthesis, there are *Knowledge gap* on the integration between digital marketing transformation, Islamic boarding school economic empowerment, and TikTok-based participatory mentoring. The existing literature has provided evidence on the benefits of digital marketing for UMKM and Islamic boarding school businesses, and shows that PAR can be used to drive change through active partner involvement. However, studies that specifically integrate the identification of marketing problems, the design of TikTok visual content strategies, the formation of digital identities, account management practices, and the strengthening of managers' independent abilities in an action cycle in an action cycle in the pesantren business unit are still relatively limited. The PAR approach is relevant because previous research has shown that action-based research is designed not just to understand problems, but to produce change and improvement through partner involvement(Felani et al., 2025). Therefore, this study offers novelty by placing TikTok as part of the organization's empowerment and learning process, not just as a promotional channel given to partners.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to describe the process of strategic assistance for digital marketing through TikTok at IZZI Bakery, analyze changes in marketing conditions before and after the implementation of the program, and evaluate the benefits and constraints of implementing TikTok as a media for pesantren-based business promotion. A qualitative approach with a Community Service framework based on *Participatory Action Research* is used to connect problem identification with real actions through the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. In its implementation, mentoring includes creating an official TikTok account, strengthening account identity, production and publication of promotional content, and assisting in social media management. The main argument of this study is that digital marketing transformation in Islamic boarding schools will be more meaningful if technology is not just introduced, but adopted through a participatory mentoring process that shapes the manager's ability to use and develop these media independently. Thus, this research is expected to make a practical contribution to strengthening the marketing capacity and economic independence of Islamic boarding schools as well as an academic contribution to the development of a more participatory and sustainable digital-based business empowerment model.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a Community Service (PkM) approach based on *Participatory Action Research* (PAR). This approach was chosen because the research is not only directed to describe the marketing conditions of IZZI Bakery, but also actively involves researchers and partners in the process of problem identification, solution planning, implementation of actions, observation of changes, and reflection on the results of activities. The research design is carried out through an action research cycle consisting of five main stages, namely problem identification, action planning, implementation of mentoring, observation and evaluation, and reflection. At the problem identification stage, the researcher conducts observations on marketing activities and the use of social media as well as interviews with managers to find out the conditions and needs of partners. The planning stage is carried out by formulating a mentoring strategy which includes creating a TikTok account, determining account identity, preparing content concepts, publication schedules, and supporting materials for digital marketing. The implementation stage is realized through the creation of official accounts, production and publication of promotional content, the preparation of captions and *hashtags*, and assistance with account management. Furthermore, observation and evaluation are carried out by observing the process of implementing strategies and managers' responses, while reflection is used to assess the achievements, obstacles, and needs for program follow-up. The series places service activities as a process of change that takes place in a participatory manner and is oriented towards increasing the capacity of partners.

Research and service activities were carried out at IZZI Bakery, a business unit located in the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School, Probolinggo Regency, East Java. The location was chosen purposively because IZZI Bakery is a partner in the implementation of KKN and at the same time has problems that are in accordance with the focus of research, namely the lack of optimal use of digital media for marketing activities. Activities are carried out during the KKN period, starting from initial observation, identification of needs, preparation of programs, implementation of mentoring, to evaluation and reflection. In this study, KKN researchers or students play a key *instrument* that is directly involved in the entire research and service process. These roles include facilitators in identifying partner needs, technical assistants in the use of social media, creators and initial managers of digital content, and IZZI Bakery's managing partners in the process of implementing marketing strategies. This active involvement is necessary so that the actions provided are not one-way, but are tailored to the real capabilities and needs of the partners. The research subjects consist of IZZI Bakery managers, employees involved in production and marketing activities, and students involved in the implementation of mentoring. Informants are determined purposively based on their involvement, knowledge, and experience in IZZI Bakery's business and marketing activities.

Data collection was carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was used to obtain a direct picture of the production process, marketing activities, promotional patterns, social media use, and managers' involvement in the implementation of digital marketing strategies. Through these observations, the researcher compared marketing conditions

before and during the implementation of the mentoring program. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with purposively selected informants to explore information about previous marketing experiences, obstacles to the use of digital media, partner needs, responses to TikTok, and managers' ability to continue managing accounts. Meanwhile, documentation was used to complement observation and interview data through photo archives of activities, documentation of the content creation process, promotional videos, capture of TikTok account identities, and evidence of content publication. The use of these three techniques allowed researchers to obtain complementary data about the IZZI Bakery digital marketing transformation process. The supporting instruments used include observation guidelines, interview guidelines, documentation sheets, field notes, mobile phones or cameras for documentation, and computer devices for data processing.

The data obtained was analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques through three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selects, focuses, groups, and simplifies the data from observations, interviews, and documentation related to the focus of the research, especially the initial marketing conditions, the TikTok mentoring process, changes in the use of digital media, program benefits, and the obstacles found. Data that are not related to the focus of the research are set aside so that the interpretation process can be carried out in a more directed manner. The next stage is the presentation of data in the form of narrative descriptions and tables describing the conditions before and after the mentoring and the process of implementing the digital marketing strategy. The last stage in the form of drawing conclusions and verifying is carried out by finding the patterns, relationships, and meanings of the data that has been presented and then re-examining its suitability with the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. The validity of the data is strengthened through source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information from managers, employees, and accompanying students, while technical triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. With this procedure, the results of the research are sought to have an adequate level of credibility in describing the process and results of digital marketing assistance at IZZI Bakery.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

IZZI Bakery's Marketing Conditions Before Mentoring

The results of observations show that IZZI Bakery is a business unit *Bakery* which is under the auspices of the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School and already has bread products with good quality and variety. Before the mentoring program was implemented, marketing activities were still dominated by conventional methods, especially direct sales to regular customers, the surrounding community, and the pesantren environment(Yanah et al., 2025). Word-of-mouth communication is one of the main channels in introducing products to consumers. This pattern has a function in maintaining relationships with customers that have been formed, but has limitations when businesses want to reach new consumers outside the surrounding environment(Budi Santoso & Akun, 2024). The results of the observation also show that IZZI Bakery does not have a TikTok account that is specifically managed as a promotional

medium. As a result, the potential for products to be introduced through digital media has not been utilized optimally. These initial conditions are the basis for the implementation of interventions in the form of digital marketing assistance through TikTok.

The problems found are not only related to the absence of digital promotional media, but also to the limited experience of managers in using TikTok as a marketing instrument. The results of the interviews show that the previous managers did not have experience in using TikTok for promotional activities so that marketing activities still rely on conventional methods. After receiving assistance, managers began to understand that social media can be used as a means to introduce products to the wider community at a relatively low cost. These findings show that the digitalization problem at IZZI Bakery has a human resource dimension. In other words, marketing transformation is not enough to be done through the provision of a platform, but requires a learning process so that managers understand the functions, mechanisms, and benefits of digital media for businesses. In the context of economic empowerment of Islamic boarding schools, this aspect is important because the sustainability of the program is highly dependent on the internal ability of partners to continue marketing practices after mentoring is completed(Rahaya et al., 2025).

Implementation of TikTok Strategic Assistance

Mentoring is carried out through a participatory approach that combines problem identification, strategy planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the initial stage, students observe IZZI Bakery's operational activities and marketing system and conduct interviews with managers to find out promotional obstacles. Based on the results of the identification, the program is directed at optimizing digital marketing through TikTok. Planning includes the preparation of content concepts, promotion strategies, upload schedules, and supporting media. In the implementation stage, students not only provide direction, but are directly involved in creating accounts, content production, caption preparation, hashtag use, and account management. This pattern shows the character of mentoring that is *learning by doing*, so that partners gain experience through direct practice, not only through theoretical material delivery.

The technical stage begins with the creation of an official IZZI Bakery TikTok account. Students determine the identity of the account, fill out the business profile, post a profile photo, prepare *a bio*, and organize supporting information so that the account has a professional and easily recognizable identity. Furthermore, the content material is collected through documentation of the process of making dough, baking, packaging, and the final results of various bread variants. The visual material is then selected and edited to produce more informative content that is in accordance with the characteristics of TikTok users. The content is equipped with *a short and communicative* caption and relevant *hashtags* before being published as an initial upload. Thus, mentoring does not stop at account formation, but includes the development of basic elements of the digital marketing ecosystem, ranging from identity, visual materials, communication messages, to publications.

Changes in Marketing Conditions Before and After Mentoring

Table 1. Comparison of IZZI Bakery Marketing Conditions Before and After Mentoring

No.	Observed Aspects	Before Mentoring	After Mentoring
1	Promotional media	Direct and *word of mouth promotion*	TikTok is available as a digital promotional medium
2	Social media accounts	Don't have an official TikTok account yet	The official TikTok account was successfully created
3	Promotional content	Structured digital content is not yet available	Some promotional photo and video content available
4	Digital identity	Not yet specifically formed	Profiles, photos, and *business bios* available
5	Branding	Known primarily by customers who have interacted directly	Products are introduced through visual content
6	Promotional reach	Limited to the surrounding environment and regular customers	Have the opportunity to reach a wider audience
7	Digital management capacity	Managers are inexperienced with TikTok	Managers gain an initial understanding of TikTok usage

Source: Data from observations, interviews, and documentation of KKN, 2026.

The comparison shows that the most noticeable changes occurred in the infrastructure and initial capacity of digital marketing. Prior to the program, IZZI Bakery did not have a TikTok account and did not have structured digital content; after the program, there was an official account equipped with a business identity and a number of promotional content. This change can be seen as a form of transformation from local relationship-based marketing to marketing that has formal digital channels. However, these changes cannot be called quantitative sales performance improvements because the service period has not allowed direct sales impact measurement. The activity report also explicitly notes that sales increases have not been measured in a short period of time. Therefore, the success of the early stages is more accurately assessed based on the formation of digital assets, increased promotion readiness, and open opportunities to expand market reach.

Formation of Digital Identity and *Brand Awareness*

One of the important findings of the mentoring is the formation of IZZI Bakery's digital identity. Before the program, business identity was mainly formed through the experience of consumers who had bought or interacted directly with the bakery. After mentoring, the identity began to be projected through a TikTok account that contained the business name, profile photo, description, and content regarding products and production activities. Visual content displayed the quality of bread, production process,

packaging process, and various variations of products available. Conceptually, this change is important because *brand awareness* is not formed only through the existence of a name or logo, but through repeated and consistent communication exposure. TikTok provides space for IZZI Bakery to transform products that were previously only known to local consumers into visual communication objects that have the potential to be found by a wider audience.

Participatory mentoring has an important meaning in the process because students do not just provide a finished account, but build digital communication elements together through the content production process. The documentation shows that promotional materials come from the bakery's real activities, from making dough to the final product. This strategy provides an advantage because the content not only contains sales messages, but also shows the business process and character. For Islamic boarding school-based businesses, the presentation of the production process can also help build a perception of the quality and credibility of the business. Thus, TikTok functions as a space for identity formation as well as a means of communicating product values. However, increasing *brand awareness* in this study is still a potential and initial foundation, not the result of improvement that has been proven through quantitative measurement of the audience.

Strategic Analysis of Marketing Transformation

The findings of the study show that IZZI Bakery's marketing transformation takes place through three main changes, namely changes in marketing channels, changes in the form of communication, and changes in management capacity. Channel changes can be seen from the presence of TikTok as a medium that was previously unavailable. Communication changes can be seen from the shift in product information that was originally conveyed, especially directly to photo- and video-based communication. Meanwhile, capacity changes can be seen from the increased understanding of managers regarding the use of social media as a means of promotion. These three changes show that marketing digitalization is not solely in the form of technology adoption, but the process of developing the organization's ability to use technology for business purposes(DA Pramudita, 2025). These findings reinforce the view that the success of digital marketing in UMKM is influenced by the ability to create engaging content, understand digital consumers, and manage social media consistently.

From the perspective of Islamic boarding school economic empowerment, the assistance also produces assets that can be used after the KKN program is completed. TikTok accounts, digital identities, and a collection of promotional photos and videos are digital resources that IZZI Bakery did not previously have. The activity documentation notes that these accounts are new digital assets that can be used to support marketing more widely and modernly. This means that the program's contribution does not only lie in promotional activities during KKN, but also in providing a foundation that allows partners to continue marketing activities independently. This is relevant to the goal of economic empowerment of pesantren because independence does not mean that business directly results in increased sales, but the ability to have resources, knowledge, and mechanisms that allow for sustainable business development(Nurjannah et al., 2025).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The initial success of the program is supported by product conditions and internal partner support. IZZI Bakery has products with good taste, clean production processes, and managerial support for KKN activities. These conditions provide adequate materials to be developed into visual content because the product has characteristics that can be displayed through photos and videos. The manager's support also simplifies the process of collecting product information and documentation. Thus, product readiness is one of the important factors in a digital marketing strategy. Social media is basically just a means; the effectiveness of communication still depends on the ability of the business to display the value of the product in an attractive and credible manner(SINTIYA, 2026).

On the other hand, there are two main obstacles, namely the limited experience of managers in managing social media independently and the limited time to implement KKN. As a result, the amount of content that can be produced is still limited and account growth cannot be observed optimally. This condition shows that digital transformation is a gradual process and cannot be judged based solely on the success of creating an account. TikTok requires continuity of publication, content creativity, interaction with the audience, and periodic evaluation. Therefore, the main challenge after the program is no longer to provide media, but to ensure that the media is truly part of IZZI Bakery's marketing routine. These findings also reinforce the importance of a mentoring model that places skill transfer and internal capacity building as the main goals.

TikTok Mentoring Flow

Overall, the mentoring process can be described through the following flow:



Figure 1: TikTok Social Media Strategic Assistance Flow at IZZI Bakery

The flow shows that interventions are not carried out sporadically, but follow the logic of action research. Marketing problems are first identified, then translated into actions in the form of account building and content production. After the action is implemented, the results are observed and evaluated to determine the next

development needs. This pattern is in line with the character of participatory mentoring that places students and partners as parties who work together in identifying problems, designing solutions, implementing programs, and evaluating results. Thus, the TikTok mentoring process can be understood as an organizational learning mechanism that connects business needs with the direct application of technology.

TikTok as the Foundation for Independent Marketing of Islamic Boarding Schools

The findings of the research reinforce previous research that places digital marketing as an instrument for MSME capacity building. (Rahayu et al., 2025) shows that the *Participatory Action Research* can be used to connect the identification of MSME problems with education and the implementation of digital marketing. IZZI Bakery's findings expand this perspective by showing its application to business units in the pesantren environment, where actions do not stop at education, but produce accounts and content that can be used by partners. Similarly, research on digital marketing in UMKM shows the importance of improving technological skills to expand market coverage. The findings of IZZI Bakery show that these skills need to be translated through direct practice according to product characteristics and partner capacity.

The advantage of the participatory mentoring approach in the case of IZZI Bakery lies in its ability to reduce the distance between "knowing" and "being able to do". Managers not only obtain information about the benefits of TikTok, but see firsthand how accounts are created, how products are documented, how content is structured, and how publications are carried out. This process is important in the context of small businesses because the limitations of digital experiences can be an obstacle to technology adoption(Ekaputra et al., 2024). When the learning process is done through practice, technology becomes more concrete and easy to understand as part of daily business activities(Hariyono, 2023). These findings show that human resource empowerment is an integral component of digital marketing transformation.

At the same time, this study provides an important limitation to TikTok's effectiveness claims. The availability of accounts and content is indeed an indicator of successful implementation, but it is not enough to conclude an increase in sales or financial effectiveness directly(Fadillah & Setyorini, 2021). The KKN report explicitly states that the impact of increased sales cannot be measured in a short period of time. Therefore, the results of the research are more accurately interpreted as a transformation in the readiness and capacity stage of digital marketing, rather than as final evidence of improved sales performance. To obtain stronger evidence of economic impact, managers need to continue publishing consistently and record metrics such as follower growth, content reach, interaction, consumer inquiries, order conversions, and sales changes over a longer period.

Thus, the main contribution of TikTok assistance to IZZI Bakery lies in the formation of the foundation of a digital marketing ecosystem that was previously not available. The foundation consists of official accounts, digital identities, content materials, content production experience, and the manager's initial understanding of the function of social media as a marketing instrument. The existence of this foundation opens up opportunities for IZZI Bakery to develop marketing beyond the geographical boundaries of the pesantren environment. From the perspective of Islamic boarding school economic empowerment, these changes have strategic value because technology is placed as a means to increase business capacity and strengthen

independence, not as the final goal(Zaki et al., 2026). The sustainability of benefits is highly dependent on the manager's ability to maintain digital activities consistently after mentoring ends (Thahir et al., 2025).

Summary of Key Findings

Overall, the study found that TikTok's strategic mentoring resulted in the most obvious changes in the availability of digital promotional media, digital identity formation, the availability of promotional content, the expansion of market reach opportunities, and the increase in managers' initial understanding of digital marketing. However, the study has not found enough empirical evidence to state that mentoring has directly increased sales. Thus, the transformation that occurred can be positioned as the initial stage of digital empowerment that provides the infrastructure, knowledge, and experience necessary for IZZI Bakery's marketing development in the next stage. Constraints in the form of time constraints and managers' experience indicate that sustainability is an important agenda after the KKN program, especially through consistency of content production and account management.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that IZZI Bakery's marketing transformation is basically not just a change in promotional media, but a change in the way businesses build relationships with the market. Prior to mentoring, marketing relied on direct communication, repeat customers, and *word of mouth*, so the success of promotion is highly dependent on geographical proximity and social networks that have been formed. This approach still has value because it is in accordance with the character of the Islamic boarding school community, but it has limitations when businesses want to expand product introduction to consumers outside the environment. The presence of TikTok then creates new communication channels that allow IZZI Bakery's products, production processes, and identity to be communicated visually to a wider audience. Thus, the main meaning of the transformation found lies in the shift from relational-local marketing to more open, documented, and digital-ecosystem-oriented marketing. These changes also show that digitalization in UMKM does not have to start from complex technology, but can start from the ability to turn daily business activities into communication materials that are valuable for consumers.

This shift confirms the view that digital marketing provides opportunities for UMKM to expand market reach and increase business visibility through digital media. However, the results of this study expand this understanding by showing that the existence of a platform alone is not enough to produce transformation. At IZZI Bakery, changes occurred after the use of TikTok accompanied by the process of identifying needs, creating accounts, preparing digital identities, content production, publications, and management assistance. This means that new technology provides value when there is human ability that can translate it into marketing activities. These findings are in line with the study (Astuti et al., 2026) which shows that *Participatory Action Research* can be used to connect MSME problems with education and the implementation of digital marketing. The same thing is shown by (Salsabila & Mustofa, 2025), which places participation, research, and action as a series in the digital marketing mentoring process. Thus, this research strengthens the perspective that digital technology adoption is a

social-organizational process that requires learning, engagement, and adjustment to user capacity.

In the context of economic empowerment of Islamic boarding schools, the findings of the research provide a broader meaning than just increasing promotional activities. IZZI Bakery is located in an institutional environment that has an economic as well as social function, so strengthening marketing can be seen as part of strengthening the business capacity of Islamic boarding schools. TikTok assistance produces digital assets in the form of official accounts, business identities, visual materials, and initial experience in content production that can be continued to be developed after KKN activities are completed. This is in line with research on digital marketing of Islamic boarding school-based UMKM which emphasizes the importance of improving technological skills to expand the scope of marketing and strengthen business competitiveness (Yanah et al., 2025). Thus, the results of this study confirm that the economic empowerment of Islamic boarding schools needs to include strengthening the capacity of human resources and technology management skills. The difference is that this study emphasizes that this capacity is built through direct practice and mentoring, so that managers not only receive knowledge, but also gain experience in running the digital marketing process.

The effectiveness of the PAR approach in this study can be explained through its interactive character. In the one-way training model, participants tend to be placed as recipients of information, while in the PAR approach, partners are part of the process of understanding the problem and determining actions. At IZZI Bakery, mentoring starts from the real conditions of the business, then is directed to the marketing needs that are considered the most relevant. Students function as facilitators as well as technical assistants, while business managers are involved in the learning and application process. This pattern allows digital strategies to be tailored to the capabilities and characteristics of partners' products. Conceptually, the findings expand the application of PAR in MSME empowerment because technology is not positioned as a stand-alone intervention, but as a tool for change learned through a cycle of action and reflection(Susanto et al., 2025). In the context of IZZI Bakery, this process is important to reduce dependence on companions so that there is an opportunity for managers to continue managing social media independently.

The visual aspect of TikTok's strategy is also an important factor in explaining the formation of the foundation *Brand Awareness*. Bread products are products that have a strong visual character, so photos, videos of the production process, packaging, and product display can function as a communication stimulus that is easier to understand than text-based promotions alone. Mentoring that turns production activities into content allows consumers not only to know the name of the product, but also to get an idea of the form, process, and character of the business. In this context, TikTok functions as a medium *Storytelling* that brings together product identity with the consumer's visual experience(Erina et al., 2026). This strategy strengthens previous studies on the use of TikTok as a marketing medium for UMKM that emphasized the potential of short video content in increasing brand visibility and awareness. However, this study provides additional emphasis that the effectiveness of visual content is not only determined by the creativity of accompanying students, but also by the ability of partners to understand and pass on the content production pattern. Sustainability is therefore an integral part of the success of digital transformation.

Findings regarding *brand awareness* need to be placed proportionately. This study shows that IZZI Bakery already has digital channels that were previously unavailable and has begun to have a recognizable identity through TikTok accounts and promotional content. This condition is an important prerequisite for increasing brand awareness, but it cannot be equated with empirical evidence that *brand awareness* has increased significantly. Similarly, the lack of long-term measurement of *reach*, *engagement*, follower growth, number of consumer inquiries, order conversions, and sales makes TikTok's financial effectiveness cannot be precisely determined. The activity report also shows that the impact of increased sales cannot be directly measured due to the limited time of program implementation. Therefore, the contribution of this research is more appropriately understood as the formation of the foundation of digital marketing, rather than as final proof of TikTok's commercial success. This distinction is important academically so that the results of service do not produce causal claims that go beyond field evidence.

Practically, this study shows that effective digital mentoring for pesantren businesses needs to be directed at *capacity building*, not just *technology introduction*. Partners need to understand how to define content goals, document products, structure messages, use platform features, read audience responses, and maintain publication consistency. With this approach, TikTok accounts do not stop as a result of KKN activities, but can develop into an organization's asset that is managed internally. This implication is important for human resource management because the sustainability of digital marketing ultimately depends on who is responsible for the account, how the division of tasks is carried out, and how the activity is incorporated into the business's operational routine. From the perspective of Sharia Business Management, capacity building also supports the principles of business independence and productive resource management, as long as promotional activities are carried out in an honest, informative, and non-misleading manner to consumers.

Theoretically, this study offers an understanding that the digital transformation of Islamic boarding schools-based UMKM can be seen as a process that integrates three elements, namely technology, people, and institutional context. Technology is represented by TikTok as a digital communication medium; humans are represented by managers and accompanying students as learning actors; while the institutional context is represented by the pesantren environment that has its own social, economic, and value characteristics. The integration of the three shows that the digital transformation model applied to general UMKM cannot always be mechanically adopted in pesantren businesses. Mentoring needs to pay attention to the capacity of human resources, product character, management structure, and the purpose of institutional economic empowerment. In this position, the research expands the study of the digitalization of UMKM by placing the mentoring process as a mechanism that connects technology with organizational capabilities. This conceptual contribution can be the basis for the development of a more contextual and participatory model of technology-based pesantren economic empowerment.

Although it provides relevant findings, this study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the duration of the implementation of the KKN program is relatively limited so that the study has not been able to observe the sustainability of TikTok account management in the long term. Second, the study focuses on one business unit, namely IZZI Bakery, so that the characteristics of the product,

management, pesantren environment, and human resource capabilities are very specific to the case studied. Third, the study has not used longitudinal quantitative indicators to measure changes in *reach*, *engagement*, *conversion rate*, number of new customers, and sales before and after using TikTok. These limitations cause the results of the study to not be statistically generalized to all UMKM or pesantren business units. The findings are more appropriately understood as contextual evidence on how participatory mentoring can be used to initiate the process of digital marketing transformation in pesantren-based businesses. These limitations also show room for further research to provide stronger evidence regarding the relationship between the intensity of social media use and business performance.

Based on these limitations, further research needs to develop a research design with a longer observation period and more measurable performance indicators. Quantitative approach or *mixed methods* can be used to compare marketing conditions before and after an intervention based on indicators such as the number of followers, *Reach*, *Engagement Rate*, number of consumer leads, order conversion rate, and sales growth(Octarini, 2025). Experimental or quasi-experimental designs can also be considered to test the influence of TikTok's content strategy on consumer behavior and marketing performance. In addition, comparative research on several pesantren business units in different fields, such as food, fashion, cooperatives, services, and halal products, is needed to find out whether the mentoring patterns found at IZZI Bakery can be applied to a broader context. Future research can also test the sustainability of account management after mentoring ends so that the success of digital transformation is not only measured by the ability to create accounts and content, but also by the ability of businesses to maintain, evaluate, and develop digital strategies independently.

Overall, this discussion emphasizes that the main value of TikTok assistance at IZZI Bakery lies in the process of building capacity, not solely in the creation of new promotional media. The shift from *word of mouth* to digital marketing expands the business communication space, while the PAR approach makes the technology adoption process more participatory and in accordance with the needs of partners. The presence of accounts, digital identities, and promotional content is the initial foundation for the formation of *brand awareness* and market expansion, while strengthening the manager's ability is a determining factor for sustainability. Thus, digital marketing transformation in pesantren based businesses should be understood as an empowerment process that connects technology, human resources, marketing strategies, and economic independence goals simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the digital marketing transformation at IZZI Bakery takes place through a shift from the conventional marketing pattern that relies on local customers and *word of mouth* to the use of TikTok as a more structured promotional medium. Through the Community Service approach based on *Participatory Action Research*, the change process is carried out in stages through problem identification, strategy planning, account creation, digital identity strengthening, content production and publication, as well as observation and reflection. The results of the mentoring show the formation of a digital marketing foundation in the form of an official TikTok account, product visual content, and an increase in managers' initial understanding of the use of

social media as a marketing instrument. This finding confirms that digital transformation in pesantren based businesses is not enough to be understood as technology adoption, but as a process of empowering human resources to be able to integrate technology into business activities. Academically, this study enriches the study of Sharia Business Management, digital marketing, and Islamic boarding school economic empowerment by showing the relevance of participatory approaches in building the digital capacity of business units. Practically, mentoring produces assets and knowledge that can be the basis for managers to continue managing social media more independently and sustainably.

To maintain these results, IZZI Bakery needs to establish a responsible account manager, compile a consistent publication schedule, develop a variety of content that displays products and production processes, and conduct periodic evaluations of audience responses. This pattern can be used as an initial reference for other pesantren business units in developing digital marketing that does not stop at training activities, but is directed at mastering the skills and independence of managers. However, this study has limitations in the form of a relatively short mentoring duration and the focus of the study on one business unit so that the impact on increasing sales cannot be measured quantitatively and the results cannot be generalized to all pesantren businesses. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a quantitative, experimental, or *mixed methods* approach with a longer observation period to measure the relationship between TikTok strategy, *engagement*, audience reach, order conversion, and sales growth. The expansion of research objects in various Islamic boarding school business sectors is also needed to test the applicability of participatory mentoring models in different business contexts. Thus, the sustainability of digital transformation is not only measured by the availability of social media accounts, but also by the ability of Islamic boarding school business units to maintain digital strategies, develop human resource capacity, and convert digital activities into economic value in a sustainable manner.

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ETHICS STATEMENT

This research and Community Service (PkM) activity is carried out based on official permission from the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of the Badri Mashduqi Institute and the approval of the management of the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School and IZZI Bakery. The entire process of interviewing, observation, as well as taking and using photos and videos for promotional purposes on the IZZI Bakery TikTok account is carried out after obtaining *oral and written informed consent* from the business manager, the employee concerned, and the pesantren. This research is a non-clinical and non-invasive action research on humans, so that all information obtained is kept confidential and used solely for the sake of scientific development and partner economic empowerment. The researcher ensures that the involvement of related parties is carried out voluntarily while respecting the rights, privacy, and interests of all parties involved.

GENERATIVE AI USAGE STATEMENT

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author uses ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Gemini (Google) as generative AI tools that are limited to grammar improvement, language clarity, and assistance in compiling the structure or framework of the manuscript through *prompting assistance*. These two AI tools are not used to manipulate or generate research data, perform key analysis, or automatically establish scientific conclusions. All AI outputs have been reviewed, verified, and edited by the author, and the author is solely responsible for the accuracy, substance, integrity, and final content of this publication.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The supporting data of this study is not available for public access due to privacy and confidentiality considerations of partners, but can be obtained from the authors of the correspondence upon reasonable *request*.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author states that he does not have any conflicts of interest, whether financial, ownership, commercial, personal, or non-financial, that may affect the objectivity, findings, or writing of this manuscript. The author's involvement with IZZI Bakery and Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School is solely in the context of implementing community service programs (KKN) and academic activities.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

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