



Strengthening Msme Branding Competencies Through Social Media-Based Problem Based Learning (Pbl) in the Context Of Student Business Management

Winda Widya Dini^{1*}, Feriandy², Deni Indra Purnama Koto³
Universitas Mitra Bangsa

Corresponding Author: Winda Widya Dini: diniwidyawinda@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method assisted by social media in improving students' MSME branding abilities from a business management perspective. The background of this study is based on the still limited practical abilities of students in implementing digital branding strategies relevant to business needs. The research method used is Classroom Action Research (CAR), conducted in two cycles, including the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The research subjects were Management Study Program students taking the Social Media Technology course. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, performance assessment, documentation, and questionnaires, while data analysis used qualitative and quantitative approaches. The results of the study indicate a significant improvement in students' abilities in the aspects of branding strategy planning, content creativity, and MSME social media management, with the average score increasing from 66.7 in Cycle I to 83.3 in Cycle II. In addition, there was an increase in student participation, collaboration, and active involvement in the learning process. These findings indicate that the integration of PBL with social media is able to create contextual, applicable, and experience-based learning that is relevant to modern business management practices, particularly in digital marketing and MSME development.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology, especially social media, has significantly transformed modern business practices, including the management of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) branding. From a business management perspective, the ability to build a strong brand through social media has become one of the key factors in increasing business competitiveness and sustainability. Social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a strategic instrument in building brand awareness, increasing customer engagement, and expanding market reach effectively and efficiently.

However, in the context of higher education, particularly in the Management Study Program, the learning process in the Social Media Technology course still faces challenges. Learning tends to be theoretical and has not fully developed students' practical skills in managing MSME branding in real situations. As a result, students have limitations in integrating business management concepts with digital marketing practices relevant to current industry needs.

As an effort to address these issues, innovation in learning models is needed to connect theory with practice contextually. One relevant approach is the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method. PBL is a learning model that focuses on solving real problems as a means of developing critical thinking, analytical abilities, and students' practical skills. According to Savery (2006), PBL can improve independent learning and problem-solving skills through direct experience. Meanwhile, Hmelo-Silver (2004) states that PBL is effective in encouraging collaboration and deeper conceptual understanding.

The integration of PBL with the use of social media as a learning medium becomes an innovative strategy in the context of business management. Through this approach, students not only understand branding concepts theoretically but are also directly involved in the process of planning, content creation, and managing MSME social media accounts. This activity allows students to develop applicable digital marketing competencies while enhancing creativity and adaptability to digital market dynamics.

This study aims to improve students' MSME branding abilities through the implementation of social media-assisted PBL in the Social Media Technology course. The focus of the research includes improving abilities in designing branding strategies, creating creative content, and managing social media effectively within the framework of business management. In addition, this study also aims to increase students' active participation and involvement in experiential learning.

Thus, this study is expected not only to contribute to improving the quality of learning in higher education but also to produce graduates who possess practical competencies and are ready to face the challenges of the workforce, especially in digital marketing and technology-based MSME development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Problem Based Learning (PBL)

Problem Based Learning (PBL) is a learning model that places real problems at the center of the learning process. This model aims to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration skills through active involvement in the learning process. According to Richard I. Arends, PBL encourages students to construct knowledge through investigation and direct experience with a problem.

PBL has several main characteristics, namely student-centered learning, the use of authentic problems, collaborative group work, and reflection and evaluation processes. In its implementation, lecturers act as facilitators who guide students in finding solutions to the problems provided.

According to Cindy E. Hmelo-Silver, PBL can improve higher-order thinking skills because students are required to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the information obtained. Therefore, the PBL model is considered relevant for business management learning that requires analytical and practical problem-solving skills.

In the context of this research, PBL is used as a learning approach to help students understand and solve MSME branding problems through direct social media-based practice.

MSME Branding

Branding is the process of building the identity, image, and perception of a product or business in the minds of consumers. Branding is not only related to logos or brand names but also includes values, character, and experiences perceived by consumers toward a product or service. According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller, branding is an important element in creating competitive advantage and customer loyalty.

For MSMEs, branding plays a strategic role in increasing business competitiveness, expanding markets, and building consumer trust. However, many MSMEs still face limitations in branding management, especially in utilizing digital media. Therefore, human resources with digital technology-based branding competencies are needed.

Branding competency includes market analysis, brand identity development, promotional strategy preparation, digital content creation, and marketing effectiveness evaluation.

In this study, students are directly involved in the MSME branding process through a social media-based PBL approach in order to gain practical experience in building digital branding strategies.

Social Media as a Digital Branding Tool

Social media is a digital platform that allows users to create, share, and interact with various forms of online content. According to Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein, social media provides significant opportunities for business actors to build interactive communication with consumers.

Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are effective media for branding strategies because they can reach broad audiences at relatively low costs.

Through social media, MSMEs can introduce products, build brand identity, increase engagement, and strengthen relationships with customers.

In the learning process, the use of social media also provides more contextual and engaging learning experiences for students. Students can directly practice creating promotional content, managing business accounts, and analyzing audience responses based on engagement data. Thus, the integration of social media in learning can improve students' digital skills according to current industry needs.

Student Competencies in Business Management Learning

Student competencies in business management not only include theoretical understanding but also practical abilities in facing business challenges. Modern learning requires students to possess critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy skills.

According to constructivist theory, knowledge becomes more meaningful when obtained through direct experience and active involvement in the learning process. Therefore, the application of problem-based learning models is considered capable of improving student competencies more effectively than conventional methods.

In this study, student competencies are measured through their abilities to design MSME branding strategies, create social media content, analyze markets, and evaluate the effectiveness of digital branding. Through the implementation of social media-based PBL, students are expected to develop practical competencies relevant to workforce needs and digital business development.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the idea that the implementation of social media-based Problem Based Learning (PBL) can improve MSME branding competencies among business management students. The PBL model provides problem-based learning experiences, while social media serves as a direct practice tool in building digital branding.

Through active involvement in MSME branding projects, students gain experience in analyzing problems, developing marketing strategies, creating digital content, and evaluating branding effectiveness. Therefore, the integration of PBL and social media is believed to improve students' branding abilities more optimally compared to conventional learning methods.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach aimed at improving students' abilities in MSME branding through the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method assisted by social media. This approach was chosen because it can improve the learning process continuously through reflective action cycles.

Research Design

The research design refers to the CAR model consisting of four main stages in each cycle, namely:

1. Planning
2. Action implementation

3. Observation
4. Reflection

The study was conducted in two cycles, where each cycle was designed to improve weaknesses found in the previous cycle.

Research Subjects and Objects

The research subjects were second-semester students of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Management and Business, Mitra Bangsa University, who were taking the Social Media Technology course.

The object of the study was students' MSME branding abilities from a business management perspective, including:

1. Branding strategy planning
2. Digital content creativity
3. Social media management

Research Procedures

- a. Planning Stage

At this stage, the researcher prepared:

- a. Semester Learning Plan (RPS) based on PBL
- b. Learning scenarios based on real MSME problems
- c. Research instruments (observation sheets, assessment rubrics, questionnaires)

- d. Action Implementation Stage

Students were given real case studies related to MSME branding problems, then:

- 1) Identified and analyzed problems
- 2) Developed branding strategies based on business management
- 3) Created creative content
- 4) Implemented strategies through social media

- e. Observation Stage

The researcher observed:

- 1) Student activities and participation
- 2) Collaboration skills
- 3) Student performance in developing and managing MSME branding

- f. Reflection Stage

Evaluation of the action results was conducted to:

- 1) Identify shortcomings
- 2) Determine improvements for the next cycle

Data Collection Techniques

Research data were collected through:

- 1) Observation: to measure student involvement and activity
- 2) Performance assessment: to assess MSME branding project outcomes
- 3) Documentation: in the form of work results, social media content, and project reports
- 4) Questionnaires: to determine students' responses to the learning process

Research Instruments

The instruments used included:

- 1) Student activity observation sheets
- 2) MSME branding ability assessment rubrics
- 3) Student response questionnaires
- 4) Project result documentation

Data Analysis Techniques

a. Qualitative Analysis

Conducted through:

- 1) Data reduction
- 2) Data presentation
- 3) Conclusion drawing

Used to describe changes in learning behavior and learning processes.

b. Quantitative Analysis

Conducted by:

- 1) Calculating students' average ability scores
- 2) Calculating the percentage increase in learning outcomes between cycles

Data processing was carried out using Microsoft Excel to obtain accurate and systematic results.

Success Indicators

The study was considered successful if:

- 1) There was an increase in students' average ability scores
- 2) $\geq 75\%$ of students achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM)
- 3) There was an increase in student activity and participation in learning

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study aimed to improve students' abilities in MSME branding through the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method assisted by social media from a business management perspective. The research results obtained through two action cycles showed a significant improvement in cognitive aspects, practical skills, and student participation.

In Cycle I, students were introduced to real problems related to MSME branding, such as low engagement, inconsistent content, and inappropriate selection of social media platforms. Students were able to identify problems and develop initial strategies, but the results were still not optimal. This was indicated by:

- 1) Branding strategies that were still general
- 2) Content creativity that was not yet optimal
- 3) Social media management that lacked direction

In Cycle II, improvements were made by emphasizing audience analysis, direct practice, and team collaboration. The results showed significant improvement, where students were able to:

- 1) Develop more structured and data-based branding strategies
- 2) Produce creative content relevant to the target market
- 3) Manage MSME social media more consistently and professionally

The improvement in students' abilities can be seen in the following table:

Assessment Aspect	Cycle I	Cycle II
Strategy Planning	68	82
Content Creativity	65	85
Social Media Management	67	83
Average	66.7	83.3

There was an average increase of 16.6 points, indicating a significant improvement in students' abilities.

In addition, observation results showed that:

- Student participation increased actively in discussions
- Group collaboration became more effective
- Students became more confident in presenting project results

DISCUSSION

The research results indicate that the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method assisted by social media is effective in improving students' MSME branding abilities from a business management perspective. This improvement is visible not only from the score aspect but also from changes in students' learning behavior, which became more active, collaborative, and problem-solving oriented.

In Cycle I, students were still adapting to the PBL method, so the results obtained were not yet optimal. This condition is common in problem-based learning, where students need to adjust to learning patterns that demand independence and critical thinking.

In Cycle II, after improvements were made through strengthened guidance, direct practice, and audience analysis, significant improvement occurred. This indicates that experiential learning can improve students' understanding and skills more deeply.

From a business management perspective, the improvement in students' abilities in developing branding strategies indicates that they have been able to integrate digital marketing concepts with real practices. Students not only understood the theory but were also able to apply:

- 1) Market and audience analysis
- 2) Marketing communication strategies
- 3) Digital content management
- 4) Social media performance evaluation

The greatest improvement occurred in the content creativity aspect, indicating that social media as a learning tool can encourage innovation and creative thinking abilities among students. This is in line with the demands of the modern business world, which emphasizes differentiation and creativity in building brands.

The findings of this study are also consistent with Savery's theory (2006), which states that PBL can improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In addition, Hmelo-Silver (2004) emphasizes that PBL encourages collaborative learning that is effective in improving understanding and practical skills.

The integration of social media into learning further strengthens the effectiveness of this method because students learn in real and relevant contexts related to the development of the digital industry. This makes the learning process oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward students' professional readiness in facing the workforce.

Thus, it can be concluded that the combination of the PBL method and the use of social media can create learning that is:

- a. Active and participatory
- b. Contextual and experience-based
- c. Relevant to business and industry needs

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method assisted by social media in the Social Media Technology course has proven effective in improving students' MSME branding abilities from a business management perspective. This method is able to integrate theoretical concepts with real practices, so students not only understand the material but are also able to apply it contextually in the world of digital marketing.

The research results show a significant improvement in students' abilities, especially in the aspects of branding strategy planning, content creativity, and social media management. In addition, there was an increase in students' participation, collaboration, and self-confidence during the learning process.

The implementation of social media-assisted PBL also encourages the creation of active, innovative, and experiential learning, thereby forming practical competencies relevant to business and industry needs. Thus, this learning model not only improves learning outcomes but also strengthens students' readiness to face workforce challenges, especially in digital marketing and MSME development.

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