

IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITALIZED ECONOMY IN DEVELOPING E-COMMERCE-BASED ORNAMENTAL PLANT CULTIVATION BUSINESS ON MADIRSAN STREET IN BANGUN SARI VILLAGE, TANJUNG MORAWA DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study examines the limited application of the digital economy in developing e-commerce-based ornamental plant cultivation businesses in Bangun Sari Village, Tanjung Morawa District. The problem emerges from the fact that many ornamental plant traders along Jalan Madirsan still depend on conventional marketing, especially direct selling, while only a few have begun using social media platforms such as Facebook. Most traders are older community members who have limited digital literacy and have not fully utilized e-commerce to expand market access, strengthen promotion, and improve business competitiveness. In this context, the village government has an important role in encouraging digital transformation through training, assistance, and collaboration with local business actors. Bangun Sari Village has strong economic and environmental potential because ornamental plant cultivation is practiced by many residents, creating an attractive, beautiful, and cool village landscape. This potential can become a distinctive village asset if supported by broader digital promotion. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, with informants consisting of ornamental plant traders on Jalan Madirsan. Data were collected through literature study, observation, and interviews. The findings indicate that the implementation of digital economic practices in e-commerce-based ornamental plant business development remains suboptimal and requires stronger institutional support and guidance.

Keywords: Business Development, Digital Economy, E-Commerce.

A. INTRODUCTION

In general, local economies, such as those in rural areas, are closely related to the stages of regional development. Regional development refers to efforts made by the government or private sector to improve community welfare in a particular area by enhancing infrastructure, human resources, and regional economic productivity (Sari et al., 2020). In the context of regional development, rural economic development often becomes a major focus, with economic equity and improved quality of life as its primary objectives (Amin et al., 2020; Juliansyah, 2022a). The digital business revolution has affected rural economies in many

ways, generating increased income and new opportunities for villages. Digital business has now become a major form of economic activity in many countries, which are increasingly interconnected and interdependent with other sectors.

In the era of the digital economy, the government plays an important role in creating an ecosystem that supports technological development and innovation. The government can act as a facilitator, regulator, and catalyst in establishing regulations that are conducive to digital economic growth while maintaining a balance between innovation and security. In this study, the application of the digital economy in the development of ornamental plant cultivation remains suboptimal; therefore, it is necessary to emphasize collaboration between humans and technology. This approach leads to the human-centered concept, which integrates the capabilities of artificial intelligence and technology with human skills to create greater added value (Chui et al., 2018). The digital economy has developed rapidly, bringing new challenges and opportunities for business actors, governments, and society. The digital economy itself is defined as all economic activities that use digital technology as an integral part of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services (Muro, Liu, Whiton, & Kulkarni, 2017). The emergence of technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and blockchain has significantly transformed the business ecosystem.

Technology now enables the creation of new business models that are more flexible, efficient, and accessible to various groups in society. The existence of this technology not only expands market reach for products and services but also makes it easier for communities to access various economic opportunities. One of the pillars of the digital economy is connectivity, which allows information and data to be accessed easily across the world. In a globally connected economic system, information becomes a highly valuable asset, and data management becomes one of the key elements in improving operational efficiency.

According to a report by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2020), e-commerce platforms have helped micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) access wider markets, increase their income, and support the local economy. This technology not only facilitates trade but also helps reduce entry barriers for new business actors, thereby creating a more competitive and innovative ecosystem.

However, the digital economy also presents challenges, particularly the digital divide that still exists in several developing countries. While developed countries enjoy full access to digital technology, developing countries often continue to face infrastructure and technological accessibility constraints. This situation widens the economic gap between developed and developing countries. Overall, the digital economy is an unavoidable phenomenon, and it is important for all parties to adapt to these changes. Governments, companies, and communities need to understand both the opportunities and risks presented by the digital economy.

Economic factors also contribute to the digital divide, as the prices of digital devices such as smartphones and computers, as well as internet costs, are still considered expensive by many low-income communities. Many families in Indonesia cannot afford digital devices or stable internet subscriptions, which prevents them from participating optimally in digital economic activities. According to Ihwanudin et al. (2020), the high cost of accessing technology limits low-income communities' access to digital information and services,

thereby widening the gap between those who can afford technology and those who cannot. Subsidy programs or technological access assistance are therefore needed to reduce this gap, especially for communities that run businesses. The digital economy requires improvements in the quality of human resources capable of adapting to digital technology. In Indonesia, efforts to develop competent human resources in the field of technology continue to be carried out through various training and education programs. Overall, the digital economy not only accelerates economic growth but also encourages broader structural changes in the Indonesian economy. The transformation toward a digital economy requires synergy among the government, private sector, and society in addressing various emerging challenges. Through strong cooperation, the digital economy is expected to create sustainable positive impacts on Indonesia's economic development because it contributes to community welfare.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The digital economy is a concept that encompasses all economic activities that depend on information and communication technology (ICT) as their main driver. Fundamentally, the digital economy refers to economic activities that are transformed through the use of digital technology in various processes, ranging from production and distribution to the consumption of goods and services (Tambunan, 2017).

The digital economy is often associated with the terms "internet-based economy" or "internet economy," in which economic activities depend on digital networks that connect various economic entities. This creates an ecosystem that enables business actors, consumers, and governments to interact and conduct transactions online, thereby reducing the need for conventional physical interaction. This ecosystem can be seen in platforms such as marketplaces, where direct interaction occurs between sellers and buyers without physical intermediaries (Mulyanto, 2020). Thus, the internet is not only a medium of communication but also a basic infrastructure for production and distribution processes in the era of the digital economy. The advantages of this system include higher efficiency in business operations, cost reduction, and increased market access for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). One of the main components of the digital economy is e-commerce, which has grown rapidly in Indonesia due to the high adoption of digital technology among the public. According to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2019), the development of e-commerce in Indonesia is driven by three main factors: increasing internet penetration, government support, and changes in consumer behavior that increasingly relies on online services. E-commerce makes it easier for consumers to obtain the products they want anytime and anywhere, thereby making a significant contribution to national economic growth.

The digital era also creates opportunities for small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to compete in markets that were previously dominated by large companies. By utilizing e-commerce platforms and digital marketing, MSMEs can significantly expand their business scale without requiring large physical investments. According to Sari and Wijaya (2020), digitalization enables MSMEs to access international markets at lower costs and offer consumers a more personalized shopping experience (Sari & Wijaya, 2020). This opens opportunities for small business actors to expand their markets and build brands globally, thereby increasing the competitiveness of local products.

Business development must also be connected to the role of the government. Through programs such as the National Digital Literacy Movement and training for MSMEs, the government seeks to improve public digital literacy, particularly in regions that remain technologically underdeveloped. This improvement in digital literacy is expected to expand economic opportunities for all levels of society and reduce the digital divide (Sari & Utami, 2019). By developing people's digital capabilities, the government also encourages innovation growth and strengthens Indonesia's digital economic competitiveness at the global level.

Development can be understood as an effort to improve individuals' conceptual, theoretical, technical, and moral abilities in accordance with job or position requirements through education and training (Supriadi & La Ode Angga, 2021). SME development is more directed toward creating competitive economic actors through the strengthening of entrepreneurship and the improvement of productivity, supported by efforts to adapt to market needs, utilize innovation, and apply technology (Afifuddin, 2020). Business development refers to every effort to improve current and future work implementation by providing information, influencing attitudes, or increasing skills (Hafsah, 2014). A business is an activity that includes production and distribution processes using energy, thought, and physical effort to achieve a particular goal. Therefore, business development is a method or process of improving current and future work by expanding business activities and increasing the quality and quantity of production in economic activities through the use of thought, energy, and physical effort to achieve specific objectives. Business development also creates long-term value for companies through innovation, market expansion, and relationship strengthening. Akgun, Keskin, Byrne, and Aren (2007) argue that business development involves various activities designed to expand markets, improve customer relationships, and introduce new products or services. Several main reasons explain why business development is important, namely: (a) encouraging growth and expansion, (b) improving customer relationships, (c) expanding markets, and (d) diversifying products and services.

In business development, mobile applications provide significant benefits. Several benefits of using mobile applications for promotion include the following. First, they reduce costs. As previously explained, compared with print media, mobile applications used for marketing are more cost-efficient in terms of production. There is no need for printing costs, and application development can reduce costs by up to 70 percent. Second, data and information can always be updated. Application owners certainly want to attract consumers at all times; therefore, they need to continuously update interesting information displayed through the mobile application they use. Third, mobile applications are effective and efficient in reaching a wider range of users. Mobile applications are among the most effective and efficient promotional platforms because they can reach broader target users. Considering that smartphone users in Indonesia continue to increase from year to year, this type of application will not become obsolete. Fourth, mobile applications can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Living alongside digital media, mobile applications make it easier for users to access information anytime and anywhere, ranging from location information to estimated costs that can be easily accessed through the platform. Fifth, mobile applications serve as one of the most attractive marketing strategies. Besides functioning as a promotional strategy, mobile

applications also serve as an appealing branding strategy. This means that every business can have a similar mobile application, yet with an interface that differs from other applications.

Mobile applications can serve as an effective medium for transaction processes and communication in building a large customer base, in line with business objectives. Dwimarta (2010) states that there are three levels of interaction in online business. First, the initial level of interaction is one-to-many interaction, which refers to communication with “all customers.” Although customer identities may not be sufficiently identified, a website provides the same in-depth product information to all visitors. Even when users are able to follow their own unique paths through the material, they still receive the same “broadcast.” Second, the next level involves sending targeted and needed information. A website is developed to provide information, products, and language needed by each customer group. This approach is similar to direct marketing, where targeted messages are sent to specific customer lists with similar purchasing behavior. Third, the final level is direct but non-interactive communication, while one-to-one interactive dialogue represents the last step. Although most information still flows from marketers to customers, feedback and dialogue remain possible.

Customers are a key factor in maintaining the growth and development of an enterprise. All production activities carried out by an enterprise ultimately end in the hands of customers. Customers provide value for what they receive, which becomes profit for the enterprise. E-commerce refers to business activities conducted electronically through an internet network or the buying and selling of goods or services through digital communication channels (Adi Nugroho, 2006). E-commerce can also be defined as a business process that uses electronic technology to connect companies, consumers, and society in the form of electronic transactions and the exchange or sale of goods, services, and information electronically (Munawar, 2009). One factor that influences consumers' purchasing decisions in buying products through online media is trust. Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa (2004) state that consumer trust in e-commerce is one of the key factors in conducting online buying and selling activities.

The benefits of using e-commerce as a transaction system include the following. First, it can increase market exposure. Online transactions allow people from all over the world to order and purchase products through computer-based media without being limited by distance or time. Second, it can reduce operating costs. E-commerce transactions are mostly programmed through computers, so costs such as showrooms, excessive salary expenses, and other operational costs can be minimized. Third, it can increase customer loyalty. This is because e-commerce transaction systems provide complete information that can be accessed at any time. In addition, purchases can also be made at any time, and consumers can choose the products they want by themselves.

The term e-commerce can be viewed from four different perspectives (Turban & King, 2002). From the communication perspective, e-commerce refers to the provision of goods, services, information, or payments through computer networks or other electronic devices. From the business process perspective, e-commerce is the application of technology to automate business transactions and work procedures. From the service perspective, e-commerce is a tool that can meet the needs of companies, consumers, and management by

minimizing service costs and increasing the speed of customer service. From the online perspective, e-commerce enables the buying and selling of products and information through the internet and other online services.

According to Onno W. Purbo and Aang Arif Wahyudi (2001), e-commerce can be understood as a broad scope of technology, processes, and practices that enable business transactions without using paper as a transaction mechanism. E-commerce transactions offer several advantages, including expanding business partner networks, broadening marketing reach, providing physical transaction security, and ensuring effectiveness, efficiency, and flexibility. There are three advantages or benefits of electronic commerce, as explained by Adi Nugroho (2006).

Kalakota and Whinston (1997) refer to several different perspectives on e-commerce that remain relevant today. First, from the communication perspective, e-commerce involves the delivery of information, products, services, or payments electronically. Second, from the business process perspective, e-commerce refers to the application of technology to automate business transactions and workflows. Third, from the service perspective, e-commerce enables cost reduction while improving the speed and quality of service delivery. Fourth, from the online perspective, e-commerce involves the online buying and selling of products and information. Several examples of rapidly growing e-commerce platforms in Indonesia include Bukalapak, Shopee, Lazada, and others.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Silalahi (2012), this type of research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, in which data are collected through interviews and observation. In interactive data analysis, Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation is analyzed through three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. According to Moleong (2017), the research focus is intended to limit the scope of qualitative study and to help determine which data are relevant and which are not (Moleong, 2010). The limitation in this qualitative research is based on the level of importance or urgency of the problems addressed in the study. The research focus contains details about the topics or scope to be explored and examined in the research. The research focus serves as a general guideline for observation, allowing the observation and analysis of research findings to become more directed. Therefore, indicators are used to prevent the discussion from becoming too broad and ultimately deviating from the research title.

This research was conducted in Bangun Sari Village, Tanjung Morawa, Deli Serdang Regency. The location was selected for several reasons. First, Bangun Sari Village, particularly along Jalan Madirsan, is known for its ornamental plant cultivation, which makes it a distinctive village compared with others because of its beautiful and green environment. However, ornamental plant cultivation businesses in this area have not optimally applied the digital economy for e-commerce-based business development. The subjects of this research were informants consisting of ornamental plant cultivation traders along Jalan Madirsan. The data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation were analyzed directly, along with data collected from relevant literature sources.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the digital economy in the development of e-commerce-based ornamental plant cultivation businesses along Jalan Madirsan in Bangun Sari Village, Tanjung Morawa District, is categorized as not yet optimal based on the research findings. On average, ornamental plant cultivation traders along Jalan Madirsan do not use e-commerce to develop their businesses. Although several traders have already used technology, such as promotion through Facebook social media, they have not yet reached the stage of using e-commerce because they lack technological skills and have not received in-depth technical training related to e-commerce. The researcher used purposive sampling in the interview process. To keep the interview scope focused, the questions were based on the following indicators.

Business Actors

Based on the research findings, most ornamental plant cultivation traders are older adults rather than younger generations. This condition makes it difficult for them to learn how to use e-commerce, especially since younger generations are generally known to be more familiar with technology.

Business Development Promotion

Based on the research findings related to business development, most traders still use a conventional system, namely direct marketing by selling only at their business location, along with promotion through social media. According to the traders, although they have not yet mastered e-commerce, Bangun Sari Village is already well known for its ornamental plants. Many people from outside the area visit the village to buy plants, and visitors usually know Jalan Madirsan as an area where many people sell flowers. As a result, traders still have customers. This condition creates a mindset in which they feel comfortable with their current promotional zone. In fact, using e-commerce would automatically increase the number of buyers from various areas because it provides a wider network and can be accessed easily by anyone.

- **The Role of the Village Government in Implementing the Digital Economy**

Based on the research findings, the role of the village government in providing digital economy training for e-commerce-based business development has not specifically addressed in-depth technical aspects. However, other forms of training have already been conducted. Therefore, traders and the community still hope that, in the future, there will be training focused on business development through e-commerce. Such training should not only provide theoretical explanations but also include practical guidance until traders truly understand and master its use.

- **Trust and Security in E-Commerce**

Based on the research findings, several business traders feel that marketing ornamental plants through e-commerce may make the transaction process difficult for customers because some customers are still unfamiliar with technology and are concerned about transactions due to limited understanding of security features. In fact, if both sellers and buyers understand the technological benefits of e-commerce, they would likely prefer this type of transaction. E-commerce is more practical, saves time, and eliminates the need to visit the ornamental plant location directly.

- **Digital Competition**

Based on the research findings, traders feel that using e-commerce creates tighter competition. They also feel that they do not yet have unique superior value to compete online. Since marketplaces can be accessed widely by anyone, this becomes a challenge for traders. They are not yet ready to compete in marketplaces such as Shopee, Lazada, Bukalapak, and others.

Based on the interview findings and their connection with expert theories, the researcher interprets the data as follows.

Implementation of the Digital Economy

Dwimarta (2010) states that there are three levels of interaction in online business:

- First, the initial level of interaction is one-to-many interaction, which refers to interaction with “all customers.” Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as traders have already interacted through digitalization. For example, they upload stock information and ornamental plant promotions through WhatsApp and Facebook, which are platforms or social media that are easiest for traders to use. This form of digitalization has also increased the number of customers because they can quickly access information through technology, which in turn contributes to increased economic income.
- Second, the next level involves sending targeted and needed information. A website is developed to provide information, products, and language needed by each customer group. This approach is similar to direct marketing, in which targeted messages are sent to specific customer lists with similar purchasing behavior. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as traders apply the digital economy by providing specific information to regular customers. Traders often contact customers through chat and offer the latest ornamental plant stock. Although not all customers respond quickly, this depends on how traders attract and persuade customers to purchase the plants. Sometimes, traders also record customer requests for plants that are not currently available, and once the plants become available, they immediately inform the customers.
- Third, the final level is direct but non-interactive communication, while one-to-one interactive dialogue represents the last stage. Although most information still flows from marketers to customers, feedback and dialogue remain possible. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as traders apply this level of digital economy through WhatsApp broadcasts. They send messages to many customers at once, but the content is one-way communication, such as store opening and closing schedules, discounts on certain days, and information about the latest ornamental plant varieties. Not all customers reply, but those who are interested usually place an order.

Business Development

Akgun, Keskin, Byrne, and Aren (2007) argue that business development involves various activities designed to expand markets, improve customer relationships, and introduce new products or services. Several main reasons explain why business development is important:

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- First, business development encourages growth and expansion. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as traders develop their businesses by opening ornamental plant stalls along the roadside and arranging attractive ornamental plants in the front area so that they can be seen directly by road users and attract buyers. In the future, traders expect to have online stores using e-commerce. Although some traders are currently unable to do so, they have the intention to enter digitalization in order to encourage business growth and progress.
- Second, business development improves customer relationships. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as traders develop their businesses by maintaining friendly communication to improve customer relationships and retain customer loyalty. Traders often give discounts to regular customers. They also provide guidance on how to care for plants through WhatsApp communication, making it easier for customers to view available ornamental plant stock.
- Third, business development supports market expansion. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as traders have begun to enter the online market, although they can only market their products through social media platforms such as Facebook.
- Fourth, business development encourages product and service diversification. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as traders develop their businesses by diversifying products and services. Some traders do not only sell ornamental plants but also offer flowerpots, fertilizers, garden statues, and plant decoration services for interested customers.

E-Commerce

The term e-commerce can be viewed from four different perspectives, according to Turban and King (2002):

- From the communication perspective, e-commerce refers to the provision of goods, services, information, or payments through computer networks or other electronic devices. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as most traders have not fully used e-commerce. Traders promote their plants directly or through WhatsApp and social media platforms such as Facebook and others.
- From the business process perspective, e-commerce is the application of technology to automate business transactions and work procedures. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as most traders have not fully used e-commerce. They still conduct business transactions directly and through bank transfers. This is indeed an initial step in applying the digital economy, but traders have not optimally used e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, or Bukalapak. Older traders feel that these platforms are difficult and complicated because they do not yet understand the technical aspects, including how to create unique promotional advertisements, manage orders, arrange delivery, and handle transactions. These processes must be carried out through e-commerce and cannot be done manually, which makes traders worried when problems occur.

- From the service perspective, e-commerce is a tool that can meet the needs of companies, consumers, and management by minimizing service costs and increasing the speed of customer service. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as most traders have not fully used e-commerce. However, some traders feel that digital-era services through e-commerce are easier, more cost-efficient, and more attractive to younger generations. By creating free and interesting content, traders can reach a wider audience, which can automatically increase the number of customers.
- From the online perspective, e-commerce enables the buying and selling of products and information through the internet and other online services. Based on the research findings, this theory is related to the interview results, as most traders have not fully used e-commerce. Although they have not yet applied it directly, some traders have already experienced e-commerce by asking their children to buy seed stock and decorative pots through e-commerce platforms. This represents an initial step for traders to become familiar with digitalization and, in the future, to apply e-commerce platforms such as Shopee to facilitate buying and selling processes not only within the local area but also outside the city. Therefore, the implementation of the digital economy in e-commerce-based business development is highly beneficial for its users because it makes it easier for buyers to obtain goods without having to travel to the seller's location. Currently, more online shops such as Shopee, Lazada, Bukalapak, and others continue to emerge. Through e-commerce media, traders only need to create attractive ornamental plant content for free, and this can automatically expand their network in various directions, which can increase their income. E-commerce is a tool that facilitates more structured buying and selling transactions.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the conclusion of this study is as follows: the implementation of the digital economy in the development of e-commerce-based ornamental plant cultivation businesses along Jalan Madirsan has not yet been optimal. This can be seen from the fact that some ornamental plant traders along Jalan Madirsan are still unable to develop their businesses through e-commerce, even though technology has become highly advanced in the present era. Traders tend to rely on conventional business promotion, particularly direct marketing, although some traders have begun to develop their businesses through technology, such as promotion on social media, especially Facebook. Overall, most traders in the area are older adults who are not yet able to use e-commerce to facilitate and advance their businesses. The role of the village government is also important for the progress of the village economy. Therefore, digitalization training is needed so that traders and the community are not technologically illiterate and do not continue to market their businesses only through conventional methods. Instead, they need to move out of their comfort zone so that their business networks become wider and their products can be recognized in various regions.

Bangun Sari Village, particularly along Jalan Madirsan, is known for ornamental plant cultivation, as almost all residents in the area are involved in this activity. This creates a

beautiful and cool environment, which becomes one of the village's advantages in attracting public attention. Therefore, collaboration between the village government and the community is highly needed to promote ornamental plant cultivation by optimizing digitalization.

Based on the conclusions above, several recommendations are proposed as considerations for optimizing the implementation of the digital economy in developing e-commerce-based ornamental plant businesses along Jalan Madirsan in Naga Timbul Village, Tanjung Morawa District. First, traders and the community are expected to move beyond their comfort zone by applying the digital economy to develop their businesses through e-commerce. This is important so that they do not fall behind in the current digital era, as many benefits can be gained when traders are able to master digitalization. Second, the village government is expected to support ornamental plant cultivation traders so that their businesses can progress further by providing in-depth and technical digital economy training. This is important as a basic form of knowledge that traders need to have today in order to expand their business networks and improve their welfare as their businesses continue to develop.

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