

# Empowered Women: Strategies to Increase Competitiveness in the Era of Society 5.0 through Entrepreneurship

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aims to increase the competitiveness of women entrepreneurs in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, through human resource transformation. In the Society 5.0 era, women have a crucial role in increasing competitiveness through entrepreneurship. Even though the business potential in the region is significant, human resources have not been fully optimized. This research identified several problems, including the low competitiveness of female entrepreneurs, lack of managerial experience, lack of innovation ability, and limited education. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach, involving 115 female entrepreneurs as respondents. The results of the analysis show that the majority of female entrepreneurs are aged 41-50 years, have 2-5 years of business experience, and most do not have a business license. Nevertheless, the quality of women entrepreneurs is considered good, especially in terms of interpersonal skills and responsibility for business. The analysis also reveals the importance of the quality of human resources in increasing competitive advantage. Technical skills, management, entrepreneurship and personal maturity were identified as key factors that need to be improved. It is hoped that the transformation of human resources can improve the quality and innovation of women entrepreneurs. In the context of digitalization, women entrepreneurs need to utilize digital marketing to expand business networks. As many as 46.09% of respondents agreed with this effort. Improving the quality of human resources in terms of mastery of information technology is crucial for taking advantage of digitalization opportunities. The results of the Forum Group Discussion emphasize the importance of the business community, in-depth training, and the role of the family in supporting women entrepreneurs. Technological innovation, understanding regulations, and halal certification are also considered important to improve product quality. This research contributes by identifying the problems and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in North Sumatra. By implementing the Social Entrepreneur Strengthening Model, it is hoped that the transformation of human resources can increase the competitiveness and welfare of women entrepreneurs and support local economic growth.*

## KEYWORDS

*competitiveness, digitalization, women entrepreneurs, quality of human resources*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the Society 5.0 era, women have an increasingly important role in increasing competitiveness through entrepreneurship. Studies show that entrepreneurial competence has a significant effect on MSME business performance (Suryana, 2021). Increasing business performance can also be achieved through an effective and efficient logistics system performance improvement model (Harimurti, 2018). In addition, community empowerment through digital media has been proven to increase community productivity in various sectors, including entrepreneurial businesses (Indana et al., 2022). Digital marketing training has also been proven to have a positive impact on tourism destination marketing (Pratama, 2023).

The role of women in developing human resources in Indonesia is also increasingly recognized, especially in facing challenges in the pandemic era (Permatasari et al., 2021). Apart from that, women also play a role in efforts to increase family income in the 4.0 era (Ratih & Lestari, 2020). Supporting the role of women in efforts to increase family income is also in line with the role of millennial farmers in supporting exports of agricultural products in Indonesia (Rachmawati & Gunawan, 2020). However, it needs to be acknowledged that women's empowerment, especially in the coastal sector, has not been fully managed strategically by the government (Rondonuwu et al., 2013). Thus, in the context of Society 5.0, empowering women through entrepreneurship is crucial in increasing competitiveness. Concrete efforts are needed to improve entrepreneurial competence, implement effective models, utilize digital media, and empower women in various business sectors to achieve sustainable increases in competitiveness. North Sumatra has significant business potential, especially in the Medan and Deli Serdang areas, but human resources in this area have not been fully optimized to support the community's economic growth. Medan City, as the provincial capital, and Deli Serdang, with the largest population in North Sumatra Province, have the potential to be recognized as MSME centers with an approach that involves the community as the main managers and main beneficiaries. The concept of entrepreneurship refers to creative and innovative individuals who have the ability to establish and develop their own business (Sofia and Paramita, 2015). However, this research highlights several issues that need to be addressed. First, the low competitiveness of women entrepreneurs, especially in the face of declining performance due to difficult economic conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, lack of experience in business management, including financial management, human resources, digital marketing and production efficiency. Third, lack of innovation skills, such as creating new ideas, taking risks, and exploring new ideas. Fourth, the majority of small entrepreneurs have low education and limited work experience, driven only by motivation and enthusiasm for business (Wibowo and Nulhaqim, 2015). This research focuses on women's economic empowerment in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency. However, obstacles such as low quality of human resources, limited income, low education, limited managerial skills, and limitations in entrepreneurship are obstacles. Therefore, further research is needed to understand the role of human resource transformation in supporting entrepreneurial activities, improving the family economy, and exploiting local economic potential (Dalimunthe and Siahaan, 2020).

This research aims to build the competitive advantage of small women entrepreneurs in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency through human resource (HR) transformation. By implementing the Social Entrepreneur Strengthening Model, it is hoped that HR transformation can produce more qualified and innovative women entrepreneurs. The research focus involves the women's business community in North Sumatra, with the aim of empowering women in improving the family economy. Obstacles such as low quality of

human resources, minimal ability to create product value, product quality, and suboptimal use of digital technology need to be overcome. Therefore, the transformation of human resources is crucial in supporting community activities and managing local economic potential. This research was initiated by the University of North Sumatra as an effort to improve social welfare and change community behavior patterns through transforming human resources in the women's business community (Medan City and Deli Serdang). The social entrepreneur model with innovative performance is expected to provide effective solutions (Emillia, et al., 2020). to overcome social and economic problems faced by society.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Quality of human resources**

The quality of human resources (HR) has a significant role in increasing competitive advantage in entrepreneurship. Research by Ardiana, Brahmayanti, & Subaedi (2010) shows that the quality of human resources, especially in terms of competencies such as knowledge, skills and abilities, is very necessary in the context of entrepreneurship (Suindari & Juniariani, 2020). Quality human resources will be able to create innovative comparative and competitive value by using energy, creativity and imagination (Jusmelinda, 2022). Apart from that, the quality of human resources also influences company performance, both directly and through mediating factors such as management information systems Hasan et al. (2022) and internal control systems (Brotojoyo & Purwantini, 2021).

The influence of HR quality is also seen in various aspects, such as financial performance (Hidayakh et al., 2020), quality of financial reports (Sari et al., 2020), and competitive advantage (Aryaningtyas et al., 2020). The results of the F test show that the quality of human resources, internal control systems and interpersonal communication have a significant effect on employee performance (Brotojoyo & Purwantini, 2021). Apart from that, the quality of human resources also plays a role in increasing the creativity of employee performance Sulistiyowati (2021) and has a positive influence on the company's market value (Kaukab & Lufthiadi, 2021). However, it is important to remember that the quality of human resources can also be an obstacle if it is not met. For example, if the human resources who implement the accounting system do not have the required quality, the resulting accounting information could be bad ("Analysis of the Implementation of Responsibility Accounting at the Grand Nanggroe Hotel in Aceh", 2021). Therefore, efforts need to be made to improve the quality of human resources through education, training, management support, and providing clear rewards and sanctions. In the context of entrepreneurship, the quality of human resources can also influence the competitive advantage of micro, small and medium enterprises (Aryaningtyas et al. , 2020). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the quality of human resources in an effort to increase competitiveness and success in entrepreneurship.

### **Competitiveness**

In the context of competitive advantage of women entrepreneurs, there are several factors that can influence competitive advantage and business performance. Competitive advantage can be found from management's ability to explore the company's functional areas of competence such as service competence, providing good service to customers, with good service and in accordance with the wishes of customers who are always dissatisfied, so the company must make improvements in service. This will be followed by the formation of customer loyalty (Afrianto & Kamaludin, 2023). Competitive advantage can also be obtained through market orientation, innovation, differentiation strategy, information technology capabilities, and intellectual capital (Khairina et al., 2022; Kencana & Giantari,

2021; Afiyati et al., 2019; Feranita & Setiawan, 2019; Wijaya & Simamora, 2022; Purwanto & Mela, 2021). Apart from that, competitive advantage is also influenced by interpersonal skills, total quality management (TQM), and entrepreneurial orientation (Rahmawati et al., 2022; Rosyadi & Ramadhani, 2020; Tholib et al., 2021). In the context of women's entrepreneurship, the main motivation for women to become entrepreneurs is because they do not have a job (Setyoningrum & Herdawan, 2022). However, there are obstacles to the development of women's entrepreneurship due to gender between women and men in the entrepreneurial environment (Maimuna et al., 2022). In addition, female entrepreneurs can be defined as women who own and run a business innovatively, confidently, creatively, and are able to achieve economic independence both individually and together with other people (Prajawati, 2021).

In the context of competitive advantage, business sustainability can be improved through innovation which is used as a basis for business to increase competitive advantage in the long term so that the business is sustainable (Wurlina et al., 2022). In addition, a company's competitive advantage results from the company's unique resources in the form of valuable knowledge, individual skills, and management that are rare and unique, cannot be imitated, and have no substitute (Nurchayati, 2020). From an entrepreneurial orientation perspective, women can increase involvement in the development of women's unique knowledge-based MSMEs (Haryati et al., 2022). Through entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship, women gain self-confidence, self-esteem, and decision-making experience that leads to greater control over their lives in the social, economic, and political fields (Primandaru, 2021). Based on systematic mapping in the last 10 years, the advantages Sustainable competitiveness for entrepreneurs can be obtained by referring to the topic of resources and capabilities (Zulkifli et al., 2023). Therefore, to achieve competitive advantage in entrepreneurship, women need to pay attention to these factors and overcome the obstacles they may face due to gender in the entrepreneurial environment.

### **Digitalization**

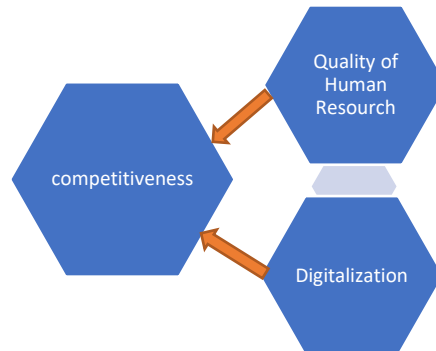
In the era of digitalization, entrepreneurship experiences positive impacts in various aspects, such as promoting innovation, creating job opportunities, and increasing social and economic productivity, so that it has become a priority for governments in various countries (Yanti et al., 2022). The development of the internet in the era of digitalization has also opened up digital business opportunities for entrepreneurs, such as the business providing entrusted services (jastip) which is developing in Indonesia (Syauqina & Ichsan, 2022). In addition, digital marketing training has been proven effective in increasing sales for MSMEs (Fahdia et al., 2022). Adoption of a digital marketing model can also help micro businesses to support the marketing of the products they produce (Handajani et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial skills contribute to organizational performance, growth and profitability (Fahmi et al., 2020). In addition, entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, and company performance are closely related to a clear understanding of environmental factors and competitive strategy choices (Lukiastuti, 2021). Entrepreneurial orientation factors and stronger business strategies can also influence the better performance of MSMEs (Primadhita et al., 2021).

The use of information technology in the business world continues to develop in various strategies and patterns which can basically be grouped into digital media systems ("Information Technology Application System in the Collection and Distribution of Ziswaf at the Medan Alwashliyah Amil Zakat Institution", 2022). Apart from that, the use of digital marketing has become an alternative for developing marketing strategies in various business sectors, including BUMDes convection (Rahmayanie et al., 2022). In the context of MSMEs,

digitalization also plays an important role in increasing business resilience, performance and business growth (Maulana & Yuliani, 2023; Hardi et al., 2022; Viariani et al., 2022). However, research results show that digitalization is not a moderating variable that strengthens or weakens the influence of company assets or organizational legitimacy on banking financial performance (Supriatin & Aulia, 2022).

Thus, digitalization has opened up new opportunities for entrepreneurs in various business sectors, but also requires adaptation and mastery of information technology to utilize it effectively.

### **Quality of human resources**



**Figure 1.** Theoretical Framework

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The type of research carried out is qualitative descriptive research which includes comparative analysis of the roles of women and men. The main focus of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how female entrepreneurship can influence Human Resources. It is hoped that this study will produce new ideas to exploit the economic, social and cultural potential of society, as well as form a scientific cluster in the fields of Human Resources and Women's Entrepreneurship. The research sample consisted of female entrepreneurs operating in North Sumatra, especially in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency. The respondents who will be taken in random stages are 116 female entrepreneurs, with 57 respondents coming from Medan City and 58 respondents from Deli Serdang Regency.

The aim of this research is to increase understanding and progress of businesses owned by women entrepreneurs. The main focus includes the potential of the female entrepreneurial community to become new entrepreneurs and the development of existing businesses. After carrying out the FGD activities, respondents will be asked to fill out a questionnaire with guidance and supervision to ensure objectivity and effectiveness in filling in the data. Apart from that, this research will also use secondary data such as reports on the performance of women entrepreneurs and the number of women entrepreneurs in North Sumatra. This secondary data will be obtained from the Department of Cooperatives and Small Businesses at the Provincial, Regency and City levels, as well as data from BPS. This research will be carried out in two locations, namely Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency, with a time span from July 2023 to September 2023. The number of respondents determined was 115 female entrepreneurs in the region, with certain criteria that had been determined.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this study, the instrument used was a questionnaire with a total of 16 statements for 3 variables. The respondents in this research are female entrepreneurs who are members of the

entrepreneurial community in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency which are still active and existing during the last 3 years. The primary data collection that has been carried out is then analyzed using descriptive analysis.

### ***Analysis of Respondent Characteristics***

Data The results presented in this research are primary data that was collected at the time the research was conducted, namely in August-September. The respondents in this research were 115 female entrepreneurs in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency. The following are the results of the analysis of respondents' characteristics consisting of age, length of entrepreneurship and business license.

**Table 1.** Description of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	≤20 Years	1	0.87
	21-30 Years	16	13.91
	31-40 Years	31	26.96
	41-50 Years	42	36.52
	≥51 Years	25	21.74
<b>Long time entrepreneurship</b>	<2 Years	10	8.70
	2-5 Years	54	46.96
	6-10 Years	25	21.74
	>10 Years	26	22.61
<b>Business permit</b>	PIRT	1	0.87
	OSS	16	13.91
	Halal Certificate	34	29.57
	There isn't any yet	64	55.65

Source: 2023 Questionnaire

Based on Table 1 regarding the characteristics of respondents based on age, it shows that the majority of female entrepreneurs in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency are aged 41-50 years with a percentage of 36.52%. This is because in running their businesses, female entrepreneurs feel the need to channel their talents, enjoy themselves, self-actualize, and increase family income for daily needs. At this age, the average female entrepreneur already has children who are in school or college, so additional income is needed to meet the children's educational needs. Based on the characteristics of the length of entrepreneurship, the average has had a business for the last 2-5 years with a percentage of 46.96%. In this relatively short period of time, it is possible that women entrepreneurs have not carried out many innovations and have relatively low competitiveness. So women entrepreneurs need to increase their potential and strengthen their competitiveness in order to be able to become superior women entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, for business permits, the majority of female entrepreneurs still do not have business permits, whether IPRT, OSS or Halal Certificate, at 55.65%. However, there are quite a lot of people who have halal certificates, there are 34 female entrepreneurs who already have halal permits. This is due to the lack of education given to female entrepreneurs about the importance of legal licensing for their business so that it can develop further and be able to compete with other products as well as the

limitations of female entrepreneurs in gaining access to make it easier for them to obtain managed business permits.

**Description Analysis**

The results of the questionnaire and in-depth interviews conducted with respondents illustrate how the respondents' answers to the questions asked in the questionnaire are distributed. The following are the results of the distribution of respondents' answers which can be seen in the following table.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Respondents' Answers to HR Quality Variables

Quality of HR	STS	T.S	K.S	S	SS	Total	Mean	Information
	F	F	F	F	F	F		
	%	%	%	%	%	%		
I involve employees in a training program with the aim of improving the quality of work.	4	15	17	70	9	115	3.57	Enough
	3.48	13.04	14.78	60.87	7.83	100		
I updated the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to make them more up to date for employees.	2	22	19	58	14	115	3.52	Enough
	1.74	19.13	16.52	50.43	12.17	100		
I provide training to employees so they can increase production efficiency in the company.	4	21	11	67	12	115	3.54	Enough
	3.48	18.26	9.57	58.26	10.43	100		
I succeeded in developing personal abilities in improving product quality.	4	21	18	64	8	115	3.44	Enough
	3.48	18.26	15.65	55.65	6.96	100		
I have interpersonal skills	0	10	8	62	35	115	4.06	Tall
	0	8.70	6.96	53.91	30.43	100		

Source: 2023 Questionnaire

Table 2 shows that the quality of female entrepreneurs is quite good, as can be seen from the fifth statement which states that female entrepreneurs have interpersonal skills. These skills include creative expressions that are appropriate to an individual's capacity in carrying out a particular task or job. Soft skills abilities enable someone to show a level of independence in their work, be reliable in completing their tasks, and show professionalism in their field. Training obtained from the basis of work that meets established quality standards is a key factor in the development and sustainability of that quality (Fadhil, 2016). This is an important foundation for women entrepreneurs to manage and run their businesses effectively so that they can continue to grow and continue to exist (Chang and Rieple, 2013). To achieve superior human resource quality, an entrepreneur needs to have four indicators of entrepreneurial skills. First, technical skills, especially in good communication and leadership, such as involving employees in training to improve work quality. Second, management skills to plan, market products, manage finances, and implement SOPs in the business environment. Third, entrepreneurial skills, which include the ability to discipline yourself, take risks, train yourself and your team, and be able to adapt to change. Fourth,

personal maturity skills, which include self-awareness and responsibility for decisions and actions taken in running a business. In this case, an entrepreneur must also be able to increase his own potential to improve the quality of his product, which in turn can increase sales and business income.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Competitiveness Variable

Competitiveness	STS	T.S	K.S	S	SS	Total	Mean	Information
	F	F	F	F	F	F		
	%	%	%	%	%	%		
I am able to produce innovations in the business world with the aim of being able to compete with competitors.	6	38	6	38	27	115	3.37	Enough
	5.22	33.04	5.22	33.04	23.48	100		
I offer more competitive prices than those offered by competitors.	21	62	12	14	6	115	2.32	Not enough
	18.26	53.91	10.43	12.17	5.22	100		
I provide products with the highest quality standards among the products I offer.	3	13	24	35	39	115	4.27	Tall
	2.61	11.30	20.87	30.43	33.91	100		
I am able to plan marketing strategies for products.	3	11	22	47	32	115	3.82	Enough
	2.61	9.57	19.13	40.87	27.83	100		
I have expertise in recognizing business opportunities.	0	0	1	66	48	115	4.41	Very high
	0	0	0.87	57.39	41.74	100		
I am fully responsible for the implementation of the business to achieve optimal results	0	0	0	53	62	115	4.54	Very high
	0	0	0	46.09	53.91	100		

Source: 2023 Questionnaire

Table 3 shows that female entrepreneurs have the ability to take responsibility for the business with full dedication, as evidenced by the average score of 53.91%. To be able to compete in increasingly tight business competition, a responsible and innovative attitude is needed. This needs to be implemented to increase business competitiveness. Women entrepreneurs, most of whom are also housewives, have a deep understanding of their workload and capacity. Therefore, when they decide to get involved in the world of entrepreneurship, the business will be carried out responsibly and managed optimally. Apart from that, the competitiveness of women entrepreneurs is reflected in their ability to see business opportunities, reaching a percentage of 57.39%. This indicates that female entrepreneurs are ready to compete and develop their businesses, both at the national and global levels. An entrepreneur must have the ability to create, innovate, look for opportunities, manage risks and develop ideas, as well as manage human resources (Afiff, 2012). To be able to compete, an entrepreneur must be able to provide added value to the market better than his competitors. Therefore, an entrepreneur must be able to create products or services that provide value to buyers, understanding who their customers and competitors are (Porter, 1989).

**Table 4.** Distribution of Respondents' Answers to Digitalization Variables

Digitalization	STS	T.S	K.S	S	SS	Total	Mean	Information
	F	F	F	F	F	F		
	%	%	%	%	%	%		
I have the ability to adapt and follow developments in information technology.	2	14	22	51	26	115	3.74	Enough
	1.74	12.17	19.13	44.35	22.61	100		
I have skills in using social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook to market products.	5	34	18	33	25	115	3.34	Enough
	4.35	29.57	25.65	28.70	21.74	100		
I have skills in using available technology to enhance the development of my business.	4	15	24	43	29	115	3.68	Enough
	3.48	13.04	20.87	37.39	25.22	100		
I have the ability to brand my business, both through offline and online methods.	1	20	18	59	17	115	3.62	Enough
	0.87	17.39	15.65	51.30	14.78	100		
I expand my network through digital marketing strategies.	1	4	12	53	45	115	4.19	Tall
	0.87	3.48	10.43	46.09	39.13	100		

Source: 2023 Questionnaire

In table 4 regarding the digitalization variable, it can be seen that as many as 46.09% of female entrepreneurs stated that they agreed to expand their business network through the use of digital marketing. This is in line with the concept of the Society 5.0 era, where society has reached a level of development that allows them to utilize knowledge to improve welfare (Usmaedi, 2021). Expanding business networks through the use of digitalization is an important ability for women entrepreneurs to be able to adapt to changes and developments in today's times. Survey results from the Brand and Marketing Institute (BMI) show that most consumers currently make their purchasing decisions by considering the influence of social media. . Data shows that 80% of consumers in Indonesia are highly influenced by social media in determining what products they will buy (Suandy, 2017). Apart from that, female entrepreneurs need to have the ability to accept and follow developments in information technology. They need to optimize the use and development of social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and other digital platforms. Apart from that, they also need to have expertise in carrying out business branding, both offline and online, as a form of flexibility and adaptability so that they can continue to produce products that can compete according to the wants and needs of the market.

### FGD results

Forum Group Discussion (FGD) was held in Medan City and Deli Serdang Regency with the participation of 30 women entrepreneurs, 10 stakeholders from non-government parties, and 10 stakeholders from the government. The results of the FGD show that in an effort to market products, human resources are needed who are able to improve soft skills

quickly based on existing opportunities. The aim is to gain profits and overcome changes in consumer tastes or changes in the market for products desired by consumers. According to the FGD participants, human resources must also have the ability to process permits for business legality in order to join the community. The existence of a community for women small entrepreneurs is important because it provides better training regarding production, business management, and ease of processing business legality.

Women entrepreneurs are expected to be able to become important actors in entrepreneurship in the family. This can involve other family members, such as husband, children, or other family members, to improve product quality and expand marketing. The business community can also help women entrepreneurs avoid loan shark practices, establish cooperatives that support funds for entrepreneurs, and expand their market reach. MSME products require innovative technological tools to improve product quality and durability. For example, innovation in processing oily food using vacuum frying can make products last longer without changing the aroma. The use of non-machine looms (ATBM) is also needed to increase songket results in creative products. Apart from that, understanding regulations related to halal certificate permit policies in Indonesia is important. The government stipulates that by October 2024, all entrepreneurs must have halal certification. This is a new challenge for women entrepreneurs, especially those who use raw materials from animals, such as chickens and goats. Collaboration with faculties at the University of North Sumatra who have the necessary technology and innovation is also considered an important step. Women entrepreneurs also need to have the knowledge and skills in using good packaging for their products.

This involves using airtight packaging to prevent product damage. Apart from that, understanding how to cut halal meat and halal certification policies is also important knowledge for women entrepreneurs. The government, especially the North Sumatra Cooperatives and SMEs Service, is expected to provide licensing facilities, assistance in making halal certification, and assistance with tools fairly to women entrepreneurs. This aims to ensure that government policies in fostering home businesses, especially for women's businesses, have regulations that support business competitiveness. Women's small-scale entrepreneurs can contribute to economic growth in their region, including Deli Serdang Regency and Medan City. Therefore, female human resources need to undergo a transformation to be more oriented towards entrepreneurship. Women's entrepreneurship has proven positive impacts, such as increasing family income and reducing unemployment rates.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this research prove that in Medan and Deli Serdang women have a very important role in increasing family income. Therefore, women should have a business so they can generate income and help the family economy and improve welfare. To become an empowered female entrepreneur requires a transformation of human resources who previously only worked from home to now be able to become business owners and together with their husbands and family have business activities that generate income. However, the challenge is that women need to increase their competence in managing their businesses so that they develop and enter the community and commit together with the community to improve soft skills such as skills in producing quality production, marketing with digital technology such as Instagram and TikTok, as well as taking the time to take part in training, guidance, and assistance provided by the community where he is located.

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