

FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS



SUMMARY



The focus on digital skills and tools for rural entrepreneurship is important for success in a digital economy. By identifying the specific needs of rural entrepreneurs and evaluating their existing digital skills, targeted training programs and resources can be developed to provide support where it's needed. This approach promotes sustainable development through a circular economy and helps rural entrepreneurs acquire the skills they need to succeed in today's digital world.



DIGITAL METHODS USAGE

The focus group is using social media, email, and productivity tools like Office 365, Trello, and Mailchimp for their businesses. However, they need to improve their digital marketing, paid advertising, and communication skills to reach a wider audience. Digital payment options like G-pay and PayPal can simplify transactions. Graphic design tools like Canva and Venngage can create appealing marketing materials. Targeted training can help rural entrepreneurs develop digital skills and thrive in the digital economy.

EVALUATION PROCESS



The evaluation of rural entrepreneurs' digital skills showed variation in interacting, sharing, and collaborating through digital means. Targeted training programs are needed to support them in areas where they need assistance, such as managing digital identity and branding. Entrepreneurs showed good understanding of copyright, data privacy, and protecting devices. Environmental impact knowledge was mixed. By focusing on key areas such as digital marketing, advertising, and graphic design, rural entrepreneurs can be equipped with the skills they need to succeed in the digital economy.



CONCLUSIONARY END



The focus group provided valuable insights on the digital skills and tools needed by rural entrepreneurs. They are aware of their importance but lack knowledge, skills, and resources. Communication, campaigns, and creativity were identified as important skills. Targeted training and resources in these areas can help them succeed in the digital economy, create job opportunities, and increase economic activity in their local communities. We must develop programs and initiatives that bridge the digital divide and promote economic growth and development in rural areas.

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SUMMARY



To start with, it was agreed upon that the level of digital skills among entrepreneurs does not tend to vary much between the rural and urban settings. Indeed, in both contexts entrepreneurs tend to use digital technologies in some way or another, such as to organize their bookkeeping or by incorporating machines and other tools and platforms to promote their business or make their operations more efficient. This reflection can be observed in the interviews, that show that most rural entrepreneurs have a good level of several of the skills highlighted in the DigComp.



DIGITAL METHODS USAGE

Digital skills are crucial in today's world. Important ones include developing digital content, solving technical problems, identifying needs and technological responses, identifying digital competence gaps, understanding copyright and licenses, protecting devices, practicing netiquette, sharing through digital technologies, managing digital identity, and protecting the environment. These skills enable effective communication, safeguarding of personal information, responsible use of digital resources, and adapting to digital evolution.

EVALUATION PROCESS



While sustainability and circular practices are more developed in urban areas, there is growing interest among rural entrepreneurs to incorporate them into their businesses. Local and organic products are a positive step towards sustainability, requiring fewer resources to produce and transport. Digitalization presents opportunities for precision agriculture and data analytics to reduce inputs and optimize resource use. As society places greater importance on environmental sustainability, these trends will likely continue to grow in rural entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSIONARY END

In conclusion, it is safe to say that, in terms of needs of rural entrepreneurs in Sweden, there is a bigger gap in knowledge of sustainability and circular economy if compared to entrepreneurs in urban areas. It was concluded that entrepreneurs would benefit from learning about the circular economy (e.g., what it is and how to incorporate its practices into their business or find funding). However, this should be presented in an easy way, highlighting how entrepreneurs can incorporate this knowledge in their businesses today. That is because, given the reduced availability of resources that entrepreneurs usually faced, and considering that rural entrepreneurs usually have time-intensive responsibilities in their businesses, any information should be presented in a practical manner.

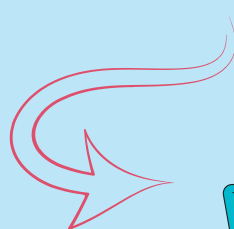
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SUMMARY



The focus group aimed to understand the digital skills and tools used and needed by rural entrepreneurs. Rural entrepreneurs were asked to share their current understanding of digital skills and tools, identify the new skills that would be beneficial for them, and evaluate their own digital skills. The majority of interviewees said they would mostly value digital skills focusing on digital marketing, advertising, and graphic design tools, as well as increasing communication to certain customer segments.



DIGITAL METHODS USAGE

All participants indicated that they use social media (mostly Facebook) and email to communicate with customers and suppliers. Business activity management tools were Microsoft Office and accounting tools, and one respondent mentioned using Trello to track business activities. The respondents identified that digital marketing, paid advertisement, and communication knowledge and skills would be beneficial for them. Other skills identified included finding digital payment solutions, graphic design tools (such as Canva), and social media management.

EVALUATION PROCESS



The interviewees were asked to rate their knowledge and skills on certain digital tools (in total, 19), on a scale from 1 to 5. This was chosen to provide insights of overall situation of the group, and to make self-evaluation process simpler for rural entrepreneurs. Rural entrepreneurs have good skills in information management and data search but vary in competency when collaborating digitally and managing digital identity. They have good knowledge of copyright and personal data protection, but varied knowledge on the environmental impact of digital tools. Entrepreneurs should continue to develop their digital skills, especially in areas with lower competency, and be aware of the environmental impact of their digital footprint.



CONCLUSIONARY END



In conclusion, the focus group revealed that rural entrepreneurs are highly aware of the importance of digital skills and tools, understanding mostly their impact on sales and attraction of customers, but there is a gap in their knowledge, particularly in areas such as creative use of digital technologies. The participants identified digital marketing, paid advertisement, and communication knowledge and skills as the most important skills that rural entrepreneurs need to acquire. The findings of this focus group can be useful for policymakers and organizations in designing programs and support systems for rural entrepreneurs to enhance their digital skills and tools.