

**MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY CONDUCTED BY KOLTIVARE
HYDROPONIC FARM BEKASI, WEST JAVA****Sonia Az Zahra*, Hepi Hapsari, Mahra Arari, and Pandi Pardian**

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on changing people's consumption patterns to become healthier as seen from the increase in sales of vegetables by 1,900% during the PPKM 2021 period. This is an opportunity for vegetable entrepreneurs, such as the Koltivare Hydroponic Farm company. This study aimed to analyze: 1) The use of marketing communication strategies used by Koltivare Hydroponic Farm, 2) The impact of marketing communications on the volume of demand for vegetables. This research used a qualitative design with the analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman models based on triangulation of data collection techniques. The results of this study indicate that the Koltivare Hydroponic Farm company uses six forms of marketing communications: 1) Advertising which is a form of non-personal communication that aims to provide information and persuasion, both goods and services, 2) Direct marketing is communication that focuses more on direct relationships that are very close to the target market, 3) Interactive marketing is marketing that utilizes technological developments, such as internet, 4) Personal selling is a form of direct communication carried out by sellers to prospective buyers, 5) Sales promotion, namely attracting buyers to make purchases, and 6) Public relations is the creation of a positive image in maintaining relations between business companies and the community. Marketing communication activities that had the most impact on increasing sales volume and market expansion are personal selling, namely activities that meet directly with the target market so that consumers can immediately see the quality of the products purchased and interactive marketing through social media because this activity is able to attract buyers.

Keywords: *hydroponics, marketing communications, strategy*

BACKGROUND

In early March 2020, Indonesia experienced the Covid-19 pandemic. According to a statement presented by the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2020, the whole world is experiencing public health issues of international emergency level caused by the Covid-19 Virus. This pandemic situation has created changes in people's consumption patterns that are healthier. People prefer to eat foods that can maintain a healthy body, such as consuming vegetables. Apart from that, the pandemic has also created a new trend, namely shopping for vegetables through online marketplaces. Based on the latest data obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2020, purchases of vegetables in Indonesian online marketplaces have increased during the pandemic.

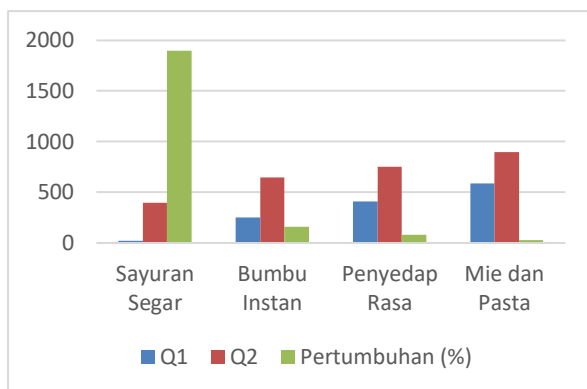


Figure 1. Food Sales in the Online Marketplace During the Pandemic Q1 & Q2 Periods

Figure 1 shows a comparison between spending patterns in Q1 (before the pandemic) and Q2 (during the pandemic). The increase in vegetables occurred during the Q2 period, namely from April to June when it came into force Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). The demand for fresh vegetables is in first place, which has increased by 1,900%, which has increased from 20,000 units to 400,000 units of vegetables from January to June 2020. The increase in vegetables in the market is motivated by a sense of public interest in consuming vegetables to maintain a healthy body. In a survey conducted by PT East West Seed in 2021, it is known that 76.4% of people choose vegetables as a health menu during the pandemic.

The increase in demand for vegetables that occurred during this pandemic can be an opportunity for entrepreneurs in urban areas, especially for hydroponic vegetable businesses. This is because in urban areas it is very rare for large agricultural land so that plant cultivation technology with the hydroponic method can be utilized. The biggest demand for hydroponic vegetables is also in big cities, such as DKI Jakarta. Based on information submitted by the DKI Jakarta Trade Service in 2017 that DKI Jakarta depends on other regions for vegetable supply of 98% and vegetable suppliers for DKI Jakarta Regional Province are the Java region, especially provinces adjacent to Jakarta, such as Banten and West Java.

One of the hydroponic vegetable entrepreneurs who saw this opportunity was the Koltivare Hydroponic Farm located in Bekasi, West Java. Koltivare is a hydroponic vegetable company that not only focuses on selling vegetables but also has a vision to develop agriculture. Therefore, even though during a pandemic many companies had to close due to lack of visitors, this did not happen to Koltivare.

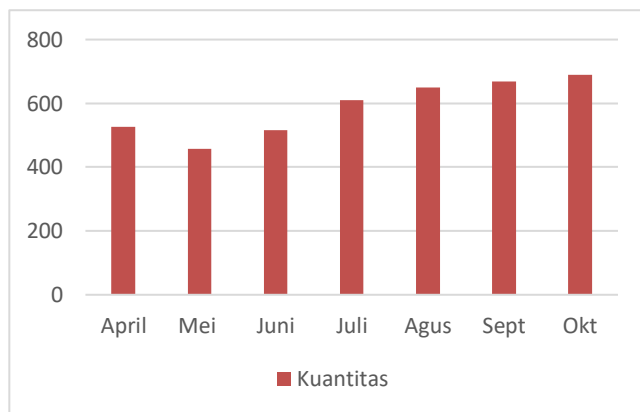


Figure 2. Demand for Koltivare Vegetables

Based on Figure 2, demand for vegetables in Koltivare during the implementation of PPKM there was an increase in demand for vegetables. This shows that during the pandemic, Koltivare's vegetable business was able to run well. Increase in demand for vegetables is inseparable from the marketing communication strategy used by Koltivare in introducing the products it sells. Marketing communication is used as a company tool in an effort to inform, persuade and remind consumers both directly and indirectly about the products being sold (Rahma, 2014).

In marketing communication, there are six elements of marketing and promotion, these elements are often referred to as the marketing communications mix. The six elements are advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion, interactive marketing, and public relations. If the six elements are carried out in a coordinated manner, it will create an integrated marketing communication. Therefore, this study aims to identify what forms of marketing communication are most effective in increasing sales volume and introducing the products being sold.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted at the Koltivare Hydroponic Farm, Bekasi City, West Java. The choice of research location was carried out with the consideration that the Koltivare Hydroponic Farm company is a vegetable company that is oriented towards agricultural development in the vegetable business sector so that there is a form of communication that is indeed carried out for agricultural development in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative method using a descriptive-qualitative design. Descriptive method is a research method used to provide an overview or analysis of research results without being used to draw broader conclusions. The research technique used is a case study.

Data collection was obtained using in-depth interview techniques, observation, FGD, and literature study. Researchers interviewed key informants, namely Project Managers, Project Officers, Digital Marketing Staff, and Koltivare retailers in the modern market where the position of the informant is someone who knows the condition of the research object as a whole. Interviews were used with the snowball technique. Furthermore, participating observations were carried out in which researchers worked at the company to see the condition of the research location, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to verify the data that had been obtained, such as data on marketing activities, sales data, and data on agricultural cultivation activities, and literature studies.

The research focus will focus on the forms of marketing communications used by companies and the impact of marketing communications on increasing sales volume and marketing outreach in introducing their products. After obtaining the information, the data collection was carried out by data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In testing the validity of the data in this study, the authors conducted triangulation, namely the technique of checking the validity of the data by utilizing the use of sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The name Koltivare comes from the English word, namely "cultivation" which means cultivation. Koltivare Hydroponic Farm is an agricultural company established in early August 2020 that focuses on selling hydroponic vegetables and agricultural development. Koltivare is a company under the Crowde company, which is an agricultural company that focuses on lending costs to agricultural entrepreneurs. The background to the establishment of Koltivare was that the Crowde

company wanted to have an agricultural development project from a business perspective located in an urban area and after that the right location was sought for the development of the agricultural business. The location of the Koltivare company is in a densely populated area close to the market so that distribution costs are not too high.

Koltivare itself has two business products, namely an agricultural vegetable garden in the Jakasampurna area, Bekasi, West Java and an agricultural development training called Agriboothcamp in the Garut area, West Java. In this research, we only focus on hydroponic vegetable gardens because Agriboothcamp is still in the planning stage. Koltivare's hydroponic vegetable garden has 60,000 planting holes of various species hydroponic vegetables, such as green spinach, red spinach, kale, kailan, and pakcoy. The price of each vegetable is also relatively cheap, which is around 20,000-30,000 per kg. The main target market for the Koltivare company is modern market retailers and young people who are interested in shopping for vegetables online. Currently modern market retailers who are regular customers are in the Jakarta and Bekasi Regions. According to information obtained from the marketing division, the communication used in managing customers in all modern markets has the same method, namely by communicating through the WhatsApp application.

Based on the results of research conducted by observation and in-depth interviews at Koltivare Hydroponic Farm regarding marketing communication strategies, it can be seen that companies use various forms of marketing communication in marketing their products which have an impact on increasing sales. The forms of marketing communication used by Koltivare include advertising, direct marketing, direct promotion, personal selling, interactive marketing, and public relations.

Advertising

Advertising is a form of non-personal communication that aims to provide information and persuasion, both goods and services. Currently, there are many ways to carry out advertising activities, you can use direct media, such as advertisements on baleho or also online through social media. In placing advertisements, usually there are advertising costs which later the company will include these advertising costs in the company's expense records. The Koltivare Hydroponic Farm company carries out advertising activities through the Instagram platform, namely Instagram ads. Before distributing the ad, the company can set how far the reach you want to reach, the costs you want to incur, how long the ad will be displayed, and the form of the ad to be distributed. The distribution of advertisements carried out by Koltivare is arranged within one day with ad placement arrangements so that more people visit Koltivare's Instagram, the location of the advertisement distribution is in the Jabodetabek area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi), gender female, age 20 years to 60 years, and advertising costs set at IDR 30,000.

The company places advertisements in the form of Instagram posts containing information on vegetable products to be sold. Advertising through Instagram ads is considered to have less impact on expanding market share, this can be seen from the results of the reach of the spread of advertisements obtained by only around 240-630 people who visited the main Koltivare Instagram page, this was conveyed by the Koltivare Project Manager, Panji Rahmatullah, when it was carried out Interview. Even though the purpose of advertising, according to Morrisian, is to disseminate information as widely as possible.



Figure 3. Advertisement

Based on the results obtained from using Instagram ads which turned out to have less impact on sales, the company prefers not to continue spreading advertisements on Instagram ads. According to Panji, the company's Project Manager, the advertisements that were distributed were less attractive, so not many potential customers came to visit Koltivare's Instagram account. According to Morrisson (2010), creative advertising is advertising that has artistic and aesthetic value and is able to get awards and have an effect on consumers so that a good advertisement is one in which there are creative advertisements as well as effective advertisements.

Direct Marketing

Direct Marketing focuses more on a very close direct relationship with the target market (Donni, 2020). The goal of direct marketing is to generate an immediate response or transaction. The times have encouraged companies to use various media for direct marketing, such as social media, the internet, catalogs and others. Some companies use this form of communication by sending via email to offer products, but unlike Koltivare which uses an application to deliver messages. Delivering messages through the application, WhatsApp, which contains a catalog of vegetable stocks to regular customers at modern markets which are carried out twice a week. The contents of the catalog consist of vegetable names and vegetable prices.

According to Donni (2020), sending catalogs directly to consumers must match catalog measurements, that is, they must be clear about the contents of the information in the catalog, make it easy to understand the information presented, and have the attractiveness of the information presented. Direct marketing activities are used by companies to build two-way communication with their consumers. Customers can directly contact the company if there are complaints experienced so as to create a feeling of bond between the consumer and the company, then the company can also easily inform its customers of changes in delivery schedules or renewal of vegetable stock. Communication activities in this way are effective enough to keep the company's regular customers, but it does not apply to potential customers because the company needs to have a consumer number first to be able to send information in the form of a vegetable catalog.

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion, which is one way to increase the volume of sales of goods and services. Promotion has an important function in marketing because in this way it can attract buyers to make purchases (Aldrian, 2021). Promotional activities can be in the form of giving special prices to resellers, holding promos at bazaars, giving samples, coupons, and various promotional activities that can motivate potential customers to buy immediately.

Realizing the importance of promotion for increasing the volume of consumer demand, Koltivare provides special prices for resellers with a minimum purchase of 10 kg, which is IDR 20,000 per kg for all types of vegetables except for kale, which costs IDR 30,000 per kg. The conditions given are only in the form of a minimum purchase with the aim of attracting consumers in the modern market. This method is quite effective in increasing sales volume and reducing the cost of sending vegetables to modern markets. Apart from that, open stands were also held using private cars in crowded places, but only during special times, such as car free days. In this activity, the company will provide price discounts, namely selling at Rp. 7,500 per kg for all vegetables except for kale at Rp. 10,000 per kg. During the open stand activity, Another sales promotion that was carried out was the provision of discounts for purchases through GrabMart, namely a 10-30% discount.

Personal Selling

One of the main targets of Koltivare Hydroponic Farm is vegetable retailers in the modern market, therefore the company realizes that personal selling will be a very effective marketing communication activity in marketing its products. Personal selling is a form of direct communication carried out by sellers to prospective buyers (Donni, 2020). The company will assign an assignment to its employees, namely a salesperson to explain the product in detail. The sales itself is to give presentations about the products being sold, persuade and influence, provide services, and demonstrate products to potential customers so that consumers are interested in working together. At this Koltivare company, a salesperson will come to several selected modern markets that are considered to have the potential to sell hydroponic vegetables because some retailers in the modern market are not interested in selling hydroponic vegetables on the grounds that the prices are much more expensive than conventional prices. After that, a salesperson will demonstrate products to foster a sense of interest in prospective buyers to buy the goods offered and explain the advantages of the products offered. As a salesperson there are stages when carrying out personal selling marketing communication activities, the following are several stages:

1. Selecting prospective customers (Prospecting and Qualifying)

This stage is the initial stage of a sales to select potential customers. Koltivare company sales will select a suitable candidate market location by looking on the internet and then a list of market locations that are considered suitable to visit will be listed. visit to see which stalls to target. The selection of this stall was chosen by looking for the busiest, largest stall, and the stall owner does not sell similar hydroponic vegetables.

2. Studying potential customers (Preapproach)

At this stage, *asales* must know and understand the provisions and the purchasing process that is acceptable (needs, consumer characteristics, and consumer lifestyle). A salesperson will visit to see which kiosk is the target. The selection of this stall was chosen by looking for the busiest, largest stall, and the stall owner does not sell similar hydroponic vegetables.

3. Approach to prospective customers (Approach)

At this stage, a salesperson behaves politely, such as shaking hands and greeting potential customers politely. Consumer will be more likely to remember how the salesperson introduced himself than what was said. Therefore, a salesperson needs to give an attractive first impression to potential customers.

4. Presentation and Demonstration

At this stage the behavior shown is such as explaining vegetable products, being able to associate the advantages of the vegetable products offered with the needs or problems of the prospective customer, and not being pushy and patient in offering. Sales must be able to maintain the interest that potential customers have so they want to buy the product. In attracting a sense of desire in prospective customers to work together, a salesperson will provide examples of vegetables offered to further convince potential customers.

5. Addressing Objection

A sale must have extensive knowledge about the product so as to be able to answer any questions from potential customers. The prospective customer here is a vegetable seller in the modern market who doesn't know much about the difference between hydroponic vegetables and conventional vegetables, therefore a salesperson must know very well the advantages of hydroponic vegetables. In addition, the types of hydroponic vegetables are very diverse and a salesperson must be able to explain each type of vegetable and its advantages. The main problem in marketing vegetables to vegetable sellers is the initial cost or initial capital that these traders do not have. Traders will usually refuse to buy product, therefore companies will offer to provide special prices with a minimum purchase of 10 kg with free shipping and purchase costs can be given after the goods arrive at the market location. This turned out to be quite attractive to traders. As stated by the traders in the five locations interviewed.

6. Closing the Sale

At this closing stage, a salesperson must be able to read the movements of potential customers whether they agree to work together or not. If the consumer shows a movement that shows interest in working together, the salesperson can start asking what vegetables the consumer will order.

7. Follow Up and Maintenance

Activities at this stage need to be carried out to satisfy consumers who have the desire to cooperate. After the agreement is made, the sales will provide a delivery schedule, provide numbers that can be contacted for both sales and consumer numbers, and other important matters. The existence of sales at several companies is still the main key to attracting consumers as well as the Koltivare company. These sales were under the responsibility of the marketing division as the person responsible for market expansion. There is only one person selling vegetables at the Koltivare company, whose job is to not only offer products to the market directly but also to report market conditions to the company. The existence of sales in the product expansion process in various modern markets is very important and this can be seen from the increasing number of regular customers at modern market retailers. Currently there are five modern market retailers, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Market location and number of orders per week

No	Location	Number of orders (kg)
1.	Beautiful Hope	10
2.	Grand Tour	12
3.	Orchid Garden	15

4.	Grand Galaxy	14
5.	Cikunir	15

Source: Company Location and Order Data, 2022

Those five locations are the result of cooperation carried out by a salesperson. This location is considered the best because it is located not too far from the company so that the cost of sending vegetables is not too high and this modern market location is seen to have customers who are quite interested in hydroponic vegetable products. The number of orders ordered by each retailer in the modern market varies every week depending on the wishes of the retailer, but there are the minimum purchase amount is 10 kg per order so that retailers can get special prices or reseller prices.

Interactive Marketing

Interactive marketing utilizes technological developments, such as the internet. Interactive marketing activities cannot be separated from social media. The benefits of interactive marketing activities through social media are that it provides an opportunity to interact more closely with consumers so as to create two-way communication that creates a sense of attachment (Donni, 2020). Marketing activities on social media are currently being carried out by many companies because they are quite effective in introducing products to a wide range. The Koltivare company chooses to market its products through the Instagram platform and Tiktok. The reason for choosing these two platforms is because Instagram and Tiktok users currently have a very large number of users and are very popular, Instagram itself has 82,329,000 users and Tiktok has 92,200,000 users in 2021. Content created on Instagram is created by the digital marketing division in the form of information on the types of vegetables being sold, the promos offered, and various information about vegetables and agriculture. The following is the form of posts on Koltivare's main Instagram page:



Figure 1. Koltivare Instagram Post

Apart from creating content, the digital marketing division also has the duty to schedule content posting on Instagram and Tiktok, look for content ideas, edit creative photos and videos, create captions, and also do a report at least once a month. Currently, Koltivare's Instagram account already has 2,935 followers and an average number of likes of 80-200 likes. Marketing communication activities carried out on Instagram are by regularly posting content on the main Instagram page, creating stories, and using the features available on Instagram, such as reels, IGTV, and Live. This activity aims to attract consumers to want to shop at Koltivare. Meanwhile, on the Tiktok platform, it just started posting Tiktok videos in July 2021 and to date, Koltivare's Tiktok Marketing Communication Strategy by Koltivare (Zahra et al., 2022)

account has gained more than 21,000 followers with 667,000 likes. The following is an example of a tiktok video that has the highest number of views, namely 2 million views.



Figure 2. Koltivare's Tiktok post

After using the Tiktok platform to market vegetables, there was an increase in vegetable sales volume. Table 2 shows the effect of the number of Tiktok views on the volume of sales of vegetables.

Table 2. Number of Views on Sales Volume 2021

No	Month	Number of views	Quantity (kg)
1.	July	2.855 million	611
2.	August	1.138 million	650
3.	September	120 thousand	668
4.	October	52 thousand	633

Source: Company Primary Data, 2021

According to the Koltivare Project Manager, Panji Rahmatullah, posts that are interesting and seen by many people on Instagram and Tiktok are posts that are informative, have a creative design, and follow existing trends. Especially for Tiktok, videos are spread more widely if there is someone in the video as a media offering a product. This can be seen from the number of viewers on Koltivare's Tiktok video, which has the highest number of viewers, which has people. In this case, Koltivare's marketing division employees play the role of being the person in Koltivare's Tiktok videos.

Public Relations

Community relations activities that are useful in creating a positive image in maintaining relations between business companies and the community. This public relations activity can later generate an advantage for the company if it is involved with various other promotional tools. In this activity, the Koltivare company greatly freed the surrounding community to come to the garden owned by Koltivare if they are interested in learning how to grow hydroponic vegetables. This method is the company's strategy to introduce the quality of vegetable products to buyers directly and build

good communication with local residents. Apart from that, this method is also a goal to develop the world of agriculture to the community because the Koltivare company has a goal to develop agriculture. Not all of marketing communication forms had an effect on increasing sales volume and market expansion and this is realized by the Koltivare company, but each form of company's marketing communication activities has an attachment to one another. If each form of marketing communication is more focused, it will have a very good impact in increasing the sales volume of vegetables and in expanding vegetable products.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of interviews and presentation of the results of the discussion regarding the marketing communication strategy used by Koltivare Hydroponic Farm to increase the volume of demand for vegetables, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Koltivare Hydroponic Farm uses six forms of marketing communications: advertising, direct marketing, interactive marketing, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relation.
2. Marketing communication activities that have the most impact on increasing sales volume are personal selling and interactive marketing. Personal selling is considered very suitable because Koltivare's main segment is the modern market retailer which requires direct person to person marketing, while interactive marketing through social media is for the market segment of young people who are active on social media, therefore creative content is very required in marketing in the digital world. The two marketing communication activities were also considered to have the most impact on the volume of demand for vegetables. The increase in sales volume was felt during the posting of Tiktok videos with an increase in sales volume of more than 600 kg or two times the amount before posting videos on Tiktok.

From this research also some suggestion can be given:

1. Marketing communication activities using sales are the main thing in marketing products at Koltivare, therefore companies need to organize, train, and motivate sales employees to be more skilled in communicating with potential customers.
2. Forms of marketing communication that have been tried and found to be unsuccessful can be evaluated so that the main reasons for the failure of these activities can be seen and other better marketing activity plans can be made.

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