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Digital Promotion Strategies And Their Effectiveness In Increasing Tobacco Sales: A Case Study In Sumberanyar Village

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Abstract

The increasing adoption of digital technologies has transformed marketing practices across various sectors, including agricultural businesses. This study aims to analyze the implementation of digital promotion strategies and evaluate their effectiveness in increasing tobacco sales in Sumberanyar Village, Indonesia. A qualitative case study approach was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of digital promotional practices implemented by local tobacco producers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis involving tobacco farmers and individuals engaged in tobacco marketing activities. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

The findings indicate that WhatsApp has become the primary digital platform used to facilitate communication between tobacco producers and prospective buyers by sharing product information, photographs, and videos before transactions are conducted. However, the implementation of digital promotion remains limited because marketing activities continue to rely heavily on conventional trading practices, while inadequate digital literacy and limited marketing capabilities hinder the broader adoption of digital technologies. Despite these challenges, digital promotion demonstrates considerable potential to improve marketing efficiency, strengthen business communication, and expand market opportunities when supported by structured promotional strategies and continuous capacity-building initiatives.

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This study concludes that strengthening digital competencies and integrating strategic digital marketing practices are essential to improving the competitiveness and sustainability of tobacco marketing in rural communities.

Keywords: Digital Promotion Strategy; Digital Marketing; Tobacco Marketing; Agricultural Marketing; Rural Business; Qualitative Study.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed business marketing practices across various economic sectors. The widespread adoption of internet-based communication, social media platforms, and digital commerce has enabled businesses to reach broader markets while maintaining relatively low promotional costs (As-syahri, 2024). As consumer behavior increasingly shifts toward online information searching and purchasing decisions, digital promotion has become an essential component of business competitiveness rather than merely a complementary marketing tool. This transformation has affected not only manufacturing and service industries but also agricultural commodities, where producers are increasingly required to integrate digital technologies into their marketing activities to remain competitive.

Indonesia is recognized as one of the world's largest tobacco-producing countries, with tobacco cultivation serving as an important source of income for rural communities. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, tobacco production continues to contribute significantly to local economies despite fluctuations in production and market prices. Nevertheless, tobacco farmers frequently encounter challenges related to limited market access, dependence on conventional distribution channels, unstable selling prices, and increasing market competition. These conditions encourage producers to seek more innovative promotional approaches that enable direct communication with potential buyers while expanding their market reach through digital platforms (Dzulfriansyah & Ernawati, 2024).

The growing penetration of social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp Business, and TikTok has created new opportunities for agricultural marketing. These platforms allow producers to disseminate product information rapidly, establish closer relationships with consumers, and promote products through interactive visual content (Sari et al., 2023). However, empirical observations indicate that many rural producers still rely predominantly on traditional promotional methods, including personal networks, local traders, and word-of-mouth marketing. The limited utilization of digital

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media often results in restricted market expansion and reduces opportunities to improve sales performance. Consequently, understanding how digital promotion strategies are implemented in rural agricultural businesses has become increasingly important (Heriyati, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in Digital Marketing Theory, which explains that digital technologies facilitate marketing communication by integrating online channels to create customer value, strengthen consumer relationships, and improve organizational performance. According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller, digital marketing extends beyond online advertising by encompassing customer engagement, value creation, and relationship management through digital platforms (Krisprimandoyo, Anshori, & Nadlifatin, 2025). In addition, the Promotion Mix Theory proposed by Philip Kotler emphasizes that promotional effectiveness depends on the strategic integration of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing to influence consumer purchasing decisions. Within the context of digital transformation, these promotional elements are increasingly implemented through social media, digital marketplaces, and online communication technologies.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that digital marketing positively influences business performance across various sectors. Research by Dave Chaffey highlights that effective digital marketing strategies improve customer engagement, brand visibility, and business competitiveness through integrated online communication (Rachmidiani & Edison, 2023). Other empirical studies have reported that social media marketing contributes significantly to increasing consumer awareness and purchase intention among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. However, existing literature has predominantly focused on urban businesses, retail enterprises, and MSMEs, while relatively limited attention has been devoted to digital promotion strategies implemented by rural agricultural producers, particularly tobacco farmers. This indicates the existence of a contextual research gap concerning the application of digital promotion in agricultural commodity marketing (Halim, 2022).

Sumberanyar Village represents one of the tobacco-producing areas where farming activities remain an important economic foundation for the local community. Despite its production potential, promotional activities are still constrained by limited digital utilization and dependence on conventional marketing channels. These conditions provide a valuable context for investigating how digital promotion strategies can be implemented more effectively to increase tobacco sales and expand market opportunities (Saprijal, 2014). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the digital promotion strategies

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employed by tobacco producers in Sumberanyar Village and to identify promotional practices that contribute to improving sales performance. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on digital marketing within the agricultural sector while offering practical insights for farmers, local entrepreneurs, and policymakers seeking to strengthen the competitiveness of rural agricultural products (Darsana et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a descriptive case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of digital promotion strategies implemented to enhance tobacco sales in Sumberanyar Village, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and promotional practices within their natural business environment rather than to examine causal relationships through statistical analysis (Adhipratama & Ernungtyas, 2025).

The research was conducted in Sumberanyar Village, where tobacco farming represents one of the primary economic activities of the local community. The research site was selected purposively due to its considerable potential in tobacco production and the increasing utilization of digital media as a marketing instrument among local producers. Data collection was carried out over the course of the study through direct engagement with participants and observations of promotional activities.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which enabled the researcher to identify individuals possessing relevant knowledge and practical experience regarding tobacco marketing. The informants consisted of tobacco farmers, business owners, and individuals directly involved in promotional and sales activities. Their diverse perspectives provided comprehensive insights into the implementation of digital promotion strategies and the challenges encountered in marketing tobacco products through online platforms (Hananto et al., 2024).

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding participants' promotional experiences, the digital platforms they utilized, and their perceptions of promotional effectiveness. Observations focused on the implementation of digital promotional activities, including the use of social media, online communication with customers, and promotional content. Documentary evidence, such as photographs, promotional materials, and business records, was also examined to strengthen the credibility of the findings through data triangulation.

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The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three interrelated stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data condensation, interview transcripts and field notes were systematically organized by identifying relevant themes associated with digital promotion strategies. The organized information was subsequently presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation and comparison across participants. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified by comparing findings obtained from multiple data sources to ensure consistency and analytical rigor (Utari & Fajariana, n.d.).

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, while methodological triangulation involved examining findings derived from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. Member checking was also undertaken by confirming interview interpretations with participants to ensure that the reported findings accurately represented their perspectives and experiences. These procedures strengthened the credibility, dependability, and overall quality of the research findings (Kusuma & Fahamsyah, 2023).

Finding and Discussion

Implementation of Digital Promotion Strategies in Tobacco Marketing

The findings indicate that the implementation of digital promotion strategies in tobacco marketing in Sumberanyar Village remains at an early stage and has not yet been fully integrated into farmers' marketing practices. Among the available digital platforms, WhatsApp has become the primary communication medium used to support promotional activities because it is widely accessible and familiar to most tobacco farmers and intermediaries. Participants explained that they usually send photographs or short videos of harvested tobacco to prospective buyers or tobacco processing companies before conducting direct transactions. This initial communication enables buyers to obtain preliminary information regarding the quality of the tobacco, including its color, leaf condition, and drying level, thereby facilitating the negotiation process and reducing uncertainty before on-site inspection (Kewirausahaan, Rahmanda, & Bengkulu, 2023).

Despite these advantages, the study reveals that the adoption of digital promotion remains relatively limited. Most marketing activities continue to rely on conventional business practices, where transactions are conducted through direct meetings and long-established relationships between farmers, intermediaries, and purchasing companies.

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Several factors contribute to the limited utilization of digital promotion, including inadequate digital literacy, limited experience in using online marketing tools, and the persistence of traditional marketing habits that have been maintained for many years. Consequently, digital platforms have not yet been strategically employed to expand market coverage or improve product competitiveness (Oktarini, 2022)

The findings further suggest that WhatsApp possesses considerable potential as an effective digital promotional tool due to its simplicity, accessibility, and widespread adoption within rural communities. Although its current use is primarily limited to sharing product information and facilitating communication, the platform could play a more strategic role in strengthening business relationships, broadening marketing networks, and increasing opportunities to obtain more competitive selling prices if accompanied by appropriate digital marketing training and capacity-building programs. These findings demonstrate that improving digital competencies among tobacco producers is essential for optimizing the effectiveness of digital promotion strategies and enhancing the sustainability of tobacco marketing in Sumberanyar Village.

Challenges and Effectiveness of Digital Promotion in Increasing Tobacco Sales

The findings reveal that the effectiveness of digital promotion in increasing tobacco sales in Sumberanyar Village has not yet reached its full potential due to several internal and external constraints. Although WhatsApp has been introduced as a communication and promotional medium, its utilization remains limited to sharing product photographs and videos with prospective buyers before direct transactions take place. As a result, digital promotion has primarily functioned as a supporting communication tool rather than as a comprehensive marketing strategy capable of expanding market reach and generating new customer segments (Sya'adah, 2024).

One of the major challenges identified in this study is the limited digital literacy among tobacco farmers and local intermediaries. Most participants demonstrated insufficient knowledge regarding the strategic use of digital platforms for product promotion, customer engagement, and market expansion. Furthermore, marketing activities continue to be strongly influenced by traditional trading practices, in which long-established personal relationships between farmers, intermediaries, and tobacco processing companies remain the primary basis for business transactions. These conditions reduce farmers' motivation to adopt more innovative promotional approaches despite the increasing availability of digital communication technologies.

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Another challenge concerns the lack of structured digital marketing strategies. Promotional activities are generally conducted without systematic planning, consistent branding, or diversified digital content that could enhance product visibility and attract a broader range of buyers. Instead, digital communication is mainly used to exchange basic product information, while pricing negotiations and purchasing decisions continue to rely on face-to-face interactions. Consequently, the contribution of digital promotion to sales growth remains relatively modest because its implementation has not been integrated into a comprehensive marketing framework (Khairunnisa, 2022).

Despite these limitations, the findings indicate that digital promotion possesses considerable potential to improve tobacco marketing performance. The accessibility, affordability, and widespread use of WhatsApp among rural communities provide an important foundation for strengthening communication between producers and buyers. Participants acknowledged that sharing visual information about tobacco quality enables potential buyers to conduct preliminary product assessments more efficiently before visiting the production site. This process accelerates information exchange, enhances transparency regarding product quality, and creates opportunities for more efficient business negotiations. Therefore, strengthening farmers' digital competencies through training, mentoring, and continuous assistance is expected to improve the effectiveness of digital promotion strategies, expand marketing networks, and ultimately contribute to increased tobacco sales in Sumberanyar Village (Siti Fatikhatus, 2024).

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of digital promotion strategies in Sumberanyar Village remains at an initial stage, with WhatsApp serving as the primary digital communication platform for tobacco marketing. Although its current use is largely limited to sharing photographs and videos of harvested tobacco with prospective buyers, this practice reflects an important transition from purely conventional marketing toward the adoption of digital communication technologies (Evva Ari Nur Viddiastuti & Jeanny Pricilia Anneke Winowatan, 2024). The findings support the concept of digital marketing proposed by Kotler and Keller, which emphasizes that digital platforms facilitate more efficient communication between producers and consumers while enabling businesses to deliver product information more quickly and effectively. In the context of tobacco marketing, WhatsApp has simplified the exchange of information regarding product quality before direct negotiations take place, thereby improving communication efficiency between farmers and buyers. However, the findings also indicate that digital promotion

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has not yet been strategically integrated into broader marketing activities capable of expanding market reach or attracting new customers (Nurngaeni, 2021).

Another important finding concerns the challenges that limit the effectiveness of digital promotion in increasing tobacco sales. The study reveals that limited digital literacy, insufficient marketing knowledge, and the persistence of traditional trading practices continue to hinder the broader adoption of digital promotional strategies. Most farmers still depend on long-established business relationships and face-to-face transactions, reducing their willingness to utilize digital platforms beyond basic communication purposes. These findings are consistent with previous studies on digital marketing adoption in rural enterprises, which argue that technological accessibility alone is insufficient to improve business performance without adequate human resource capacity and digital competencies. Consequently, successful digital transformation requires not only the availability of digital platforms but also continuous education, practical training, and institutional support that enable producers to maximize the potential of digital marketing technologies.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that digital promotion has considerable potential to improve tobacco marketing performance if implemented more systematically. The ability to provide visual information regarding tobacco quality through digital platforms contributes to greater transparency, facilitates preliminary product evaluation by buyers, and accelerates business communication. These advantages may strengthen market confidence and create opportunities for producers to establish broader commercial networks beyond their traditional marketing channels. Therefore, integrating digital promotion with structured marketing planning, attractive promotional content, and capacity-building programs for farmers may substantially improve the competitiveness of tobacco products in rural markets. Such efforts would not only support higher sales performance but also contribute to the long-term sustainability of agricultural marketing in Sumberanyar Village (Nathadiharja et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of digital promotion strategies in tobacco marketing in Sumberanyar Village remains at an early stage of development. Among the available digital platforms, WhatsApp has become the primary medium for facilitating communication between tobacco producers and prospective buyers by enabling the exchange of product information through photographs and videos. Although this practice has improved the efficiency of information sharing and supported the initial

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stages of marketing activities, digital promotion has not yet been implemented strategically to maximize market expansion and increase sales performance.

The findings further reveal that the effectiveness of digital promotion is constrained by several factors, including limited digital literacy, insufficient marketing knowledge, and the continued reliance on conventional marketing practices. These challenges have restricted the broader adoption of digital technologies and reduced the potential contribution of digital promotion to tobacco sales. Nevertheless, the study indicates that digital promotion offers significant opportunities to strengthen business communication, improve product visibility, and expand marketing networks when supported by systematic promotional planning and continuous capacity-building initiatives.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of enhancing farmers' digital competencies and encouraging the strategic integration of digital marketing practices into agricultural businesses. Such efforts are expected to improve the competitiveness of local tobacco products, create wider market opportunities, and contribute to the sustainable development of rural agribusiness in Sumberanyar Village.

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