

Research Article

Business Communication in Improving the Entrepreneurial Skills of SME Members

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Abstract.

The Sapta Mandiri Entrepreneurs Association, representing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bandung Regency, stands out as an association of business actors that has successfully weathered the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. This association actively engages in business communication to enhance the entrepreneurial skills of its members. This article presents the findings of research conducted on this phenomenon. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the different types of business communication utilized, the factors influencing business communication, and the specific purposes behind such communication in improving the entrepreneurial skills of SME members. The research approach employed for this study is a case study, while data collection techniques include literature review, in-depth interviews, and observation. The research informants comprise administrators from the Sapta Mandiri Entrepreneurs Association. The results of the study reveal two main types of business communication practiced within the association of entrepreneurs: horizontal communication and vertical communication. Several factors have been identified to influence business communication, including perception, credibility, accuracy, suitability, and control. The primary purposes of business communication are to provide essential information, persuade members, and foster cooperation, thereby contributing to the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills among SME members. In conclusion, the Sapta Mandiri Entrepreneurs Association has demonstrated resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic by employing effective business communication strategies. This has enabled the association to support its members in enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and navigating through the challenging business landscape.

Keywords: business communication, entrepreneurship, SME business people, the Covid-19 pandemic

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing, and SME business actors are trying to carry out business activities, such as marketing which of course requires skills, especially when communicating with consumers so that their products can be fully accepted. Business communication as a form of communication that is run by entrepreneurs with consumers is done verbally and non-verbally. In the communication, there are opinions, ideas, ideas, and information submitted for business purposes, especially how to make business actors have the insight and skills to improve entrepreneurship so that their business advances and develops. Like during the Covid 19 pandemic, where direct interaction between business actors and consumers was limited, business actors need to have insight into the media to connect with the target market, and promoting products is an effort to achieve this goal.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia have a role in building the country's economy, where this business is one of the businesses that is able to attract a large number of workers and survive in crisis conditions such as the Covid 19 pandemic. SMEs have an important and strategic role in generating the local economy as well as national (Silaningsih & Utami, 2018). One of the SME business actors who was able to survive the Covid 19 pandemic is Sapta Mandiri in Bandung Regency, Indonesia, where it is a community of 50 business people who produce various kinds of food such as cakes, pastries, cakes, drinks, food. other preparations, and crafts.

In this pandemic situation, although government regulations that require people to work at home have begun to be relaxed, this has led to changes in business communication and encourages business actors to actively communicate with consumers through communication media such as Facebook and Instagram. Marketing by utilizing these communication media makes it easier to find information, communicate without boundaries, and distance, this is very suitable for the Covid 19 pandemic situation. The thing that distinguishes the Sapta Mandiri SME Community from other SME communities is that they use a social media marketing system that is so active and utilize resellers to work with them to expand market share.

Based on an interview with the chairman of UKM Sapta Mandiri, the sales data of products sold by community members experienced fluctuations in sales because community members were constrained in entrepreneurial insight. In addition, the problem that is often faced by the Sapta Mandiri SME community is how to maintain product excellence, and bring out the uniqueness of the product to be different from other business actors. Previous research conducted (Hardhiyanti & Rasyid, 2017) regarding

environmental ethics-based business communication as a form of corporate social responsibility The Body Shop Indonesia, concluded that The Body Shop conducts business communication on the internal & external scope of the corporation by using the communication channels used. This study focuses more on business communication in improving the entrepreneurial skills of SME members. The research approach used is a case study in the form of a single case design. Based on the background of the problem the researcher is interested in conducting research on how business communication in improving the entrepreneurial skills of Sapta Mandiiri SME members, in Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to analyze personal selling as a form of business communication, business communication functions, and business communication processes to improve the entrepreneurial skills of SME members.

2. Business Communication

Business communication is a human activity directed at satisfying one's needs and wants through an exchange process. In business communication, marketers must consider what consumers get when buying products, especially providing quality products. Therefore, aspects that need to be considered by marketers include interpersonal communication skills, business presentation skills, and the company's motives for self-development. Katz describes business communication as an exchange of ideas, messages, and concepts related to the achievement of a set of commercial goals. That is, a communication will be made to achieve the occurrence of trade. Pikhart's research (Pikhart, 2017) examines the most common trends and attempts to find variants of business communication so as to facilitate such communication in a globalized world that leads to increased efficiency and profit. The means of communication used in this communication affect on the means of communication, the content and the speed at which information is transferred. (Fauzi et al., 2020) found that business communication is an interpersonal and organizational activity that involves the process of selling, buying goods and services with the aim of generating profits.

One form of business communication is personal selling. Personal selling is a means of marketing communication in the form of oral presentations in the form of conversations in front of potential buyers. Sales promotion is an activity that stimulates the action of buying a product quickly or the occurrence of a purchase in a short time. In every business communication that occurs there is a goal to be achieved, the following 3 main goals of business communication must be known, namely providing information (informing), providing persuasion (persuading), and cooperating (Philip & Keller, 2008).

Business Communication Function. There are four business communication functions, namely (1) providing information, (2) persuading, (3) collaborating, and (4) integrating with the audience. First, providing information, namely business communication has the function of informing or providing information related to the business world to other parties. Second, doing persuasion. The next function of business communication is persuading other parties so that what is conveyed can be understood by the audience properly and correctly. Third, collaboration, where business communication also has the function of collaborating or business cooperation between one person and another. Collaboration is carried out through business communication networks which can then facilitate business cooperation, between domestic and foreign companies.

Business Communication Process. To run a good business communication process, it takes preparation (planning), and a way to confirm that the message is not only acceptable but understandable and understandable. Therefore, a process is needed so that business communication goes well, namely first, planning, at this stage preparations must be made to get the attention of the recipient of the message. Start by communicating with precise statements about the reason and importance of the message

Second, be professional without bringing feelings. Being professional is the most important thing in the business communication process. Everyone must have a little space to express their emotional side when making decisions, especially business decisions. But if not controlled, the emotional side that arises can eliminate the purpose.

The purpose of business communication is not a personal goal, so it is very important to manage or manage egoism and emotions so that the message to be conveyed can be achieved optimally. Third, Be Tactical and Efficient, namely being tactical and efficient when carrying out business communications is very important to do because at this time. If you do business communication in writing, very many business transactions are solely done via email to convey the purpose.

In face-to-face meetings, whether in the form of live conferences, video conferences, and other conferences, it will be more effective and must be carried out on time, you must be tactical in sending messages if you really have no other choice but to send messages Fourth, the capacity of a human being must have limits. certain and different. It could be, the people involved in business communication with us are very busy so they have to divide their concentration into several things. Therefore, take follow-up steps for a better choice. Fifth, be a good listener, where the characteristics of effective business communication is to be a good listener. When we can hear well, it will give other people the opportunity to have an opinion in a communication forum. This will create a creative and collaborative environment.

3. Methods

This research was conducted by a team of lecturers from the Faculty of Communication Sciences, Bandung Islamic University, Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia. The research problem is how Business Communication Improves the Entrepreneurial Skills of SME Members. The research objective is to analyze personal selling as a form of business communication, business communication functions, and business communication processes to improve the entrepreneurial skills of SME members. This research method uses a case study in the form of a single case design (Yin, 2002). Researchers maintain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events (Moleong & Edisi, 2004; Mulyana, 2002). The unit of observation of the Business Communication research is seen in the aspect of personal selling as a form of business communication, business communication functions, and business communication processes to improve the entrepreneurial skills of SME members.

The time of the research was carried out from January to June 2022. The study was conducted in Bandung, according to the domicile of the researcher, because the primary and secondary data collection processes were carried out offline and online. Data collection techniques used observation techniques, documentation studies, and literature studies. In the observation technique, observations were made on the application of business communication in the Sapta Mandiri Entrepreneurs Association from April 1 to April 30, 2022. In the documentation study, it was carried out by collecting and analyzing the objects that had been collected, while in the literature study technique, a study through various relevant literatures was carried out. with this research. In this study, the data analysis techniques used were data reduction, data identification, and then drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out through a selection process, simplification of rough data that appears during observation, after which the researcher makes notes or summaries on the data that has been collected. In the data identification technique, data identification is carried out based on the variables that have been determined using the data that has been collected. The process of drawing conclusions in the form of drawing conclusions from the results of data identification according to the answers to the formulation of the research problem. In this step, a brief description of the conclusions of the data that has been analyzed is explained.

The informants of this research are the administrators of the Independent Spta Entrepreneurs Association. This community is a collection of small business actors, and has various types of products in the form of snacks, processed products, services.

These business actors strive to continue to maintain business in the Covid-19 pandemic situation by implementing business communication to improve the entrepreneurial skills of members. Based on information from the chairman of the association of business actors, five research informants were selected as representatives of the entire management of the association of entrepreneurs. The products produced by the informants are in the form of snacks (rempeyek, oyek), services, children's clothes. and covection.

4. Findings

4.1. Personal Selling As One Form of Business Communication

All research informants (4 April 2022) stated that personal selling aims as a means of marketing communication in the form of oral presentations in the form of conversations in front of potential buyers. Based on the interview with the first informant (4 April 2022), oral presentation as a form of personal selling really helps the company in explaining products to consumers. Through personal selling, people get to know our products, and there will also be more opportunities for consumers, even though they are still in a state of social restrictions. The second informant (5 April 2022) explained that he uses personal selling combined with Instagram media because this media is widely used by consumers, especially the features that exist on Instagram; there are many uses for promoting products such as discounts, free shipping, and giving bonuses to consumers who buy products in a certain amount. Furthermore, informant three (6 April 2022) explained that their products are often uploaded on Instagram because they are in accordance with the product's target market. This is in accordance with the research of Ratnasari, Hamdan, and Julia (2017), where business actors use Instagram to market their products in order to achieve their targets.

The fourth informant (April 8, 2022) explained that his personal selling explained about product information uploaded on Instagram, in the form of information about discounts of 10 to 20 percent given to consumers. Furthermore, the informant explained that in addition to price discounts, he also explained about free shipping provided to consumers according to events that occurred, such as at certain times, for example during Eid al-Fitr, and the new year. Information about giving bonuses was also explained in personal selling in the form of products for consumers who buy a certain amount, for example, a minimum purchase of 250 thousand rupiah is given a cake bonus. All informants (8 April 2022) also informed about promotions in the form of daily promos for online purchases via the application platform. This is done so that the company's

sales will occur in collaboration with go-food and grab-food. The fifth informant (April 8, 2022) explained that the preparation of messages in personal selling was supported by aspects of creativity. The informant further stated that Instagram has a role as a media for connecting products with consumers, therefore in compiling content it must be designed according to the target market. Informants use hashtags to increase consumer interest based on certain categories. The purpose of informants uploading product information on Instagram is to inform products, and communicate with potential consumers, as well as convey views, especially to support consumers' understanding of products and services. Based on the informant's explanation regarding personal selling as a form of business communication, it can be presented in Figure 1. as follows.

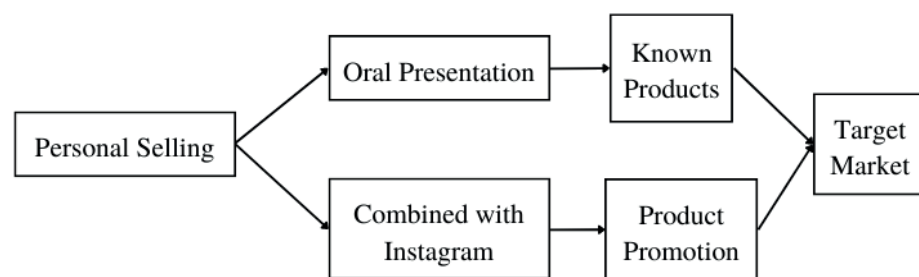


Figure 1: Personal Selling as a Form of Business Communication.

The research findings are presented in Figure 1 regarding personal selling as a form of business communication, in line with the opinion of Sulianta & Juju (2010), namely personal selling information informs sales promotion activities in which there is a combination of the scope of cyberspace elements, in online service products., as well as the strength of the community built on social networks. The goal is to connect, communicate, and share with each other. The findings of this study are in line with the research of Westberg & Pope (2014) that communicating through relationship marketing has an effect on sales promotion. Likewise, Haryani's research (Haryani, 2019), where consumer purchasing decisions are influenced by sales promotions. Another finding is that informants establish relationships with consumers through social networks such as Facebook and Instagram, this is in line with the opinion of Rahman (2012) and McNeill (2012), that the benefits derived from social networking activities are to build relationships with consumers, maintain relationships with consumers, spread promotional messages, and reach audiences. Mark et al., (2003) research shows that it is almost similar where repeat purchase loyalty in competitive markets is formed through brand acceptance by consumers.

4.2. Business Communication Function

The results of the interview with the first informant (12 April 2022) in the business communication function to inform products on Instagram, among others, by planning messages that are accurate, timely, and complete. Furthermore, the second informant explained that accurate information is information compiled using words that describe the actual situation, for example information about the content contained in the product, presented in accordance with the actual situation. The fourth informant (April 16, 2022) stated that the information presented explained the composition of the product, the authenticity of the raw materials, and so on. The third informant stated that when quoting the opinion of an expert in his field, the informant included the source of the information, so that the message conveyed was clear and reliable. The first informant (17 April 2022) explained product availability information on time, and the information was presented in full. This is intended to maintain product quality, as well as the opinion of the fifth informant (18 April 2022) who said that product quality is important to us, therefore we monitor the accuracy of the product, such as taste, appearance, product content. The majority of informants (8 June 2022) explained that they tried to approach potential consumers by presenting information about health, or presenting entertaining quotes, and providing a response column from consumers. Based on the informant's explanation regarding the business communication function, it can be presented in Figure 2. as follows.

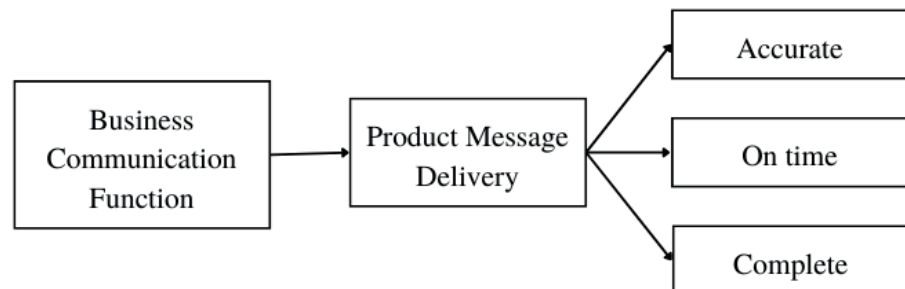


Figure 2: Business Communication Function.

The research findings are presented in Figure 2 regarding the function of business communication, among others, to provide accurate, timely, and complete information. a wealth of trusted media and content. Lee & Kim (2020) and Casaló et al., (2020) found credible product brands on Instagram have a positive impact on messages. The findings of this study are also in accordance with Puspitasari & Gusfa (2017) research, namely promotional messages provide education to consumers through communication activities, and business communication functions include offering products to consumers in

the hope that consumers are interested, persuasion, collaboration, and integration with the audience.

4.3. Business Communication Process To Improve Anggita's Entrepreneurship

The results of the interview with the first informant (11 June 2022) to carry out the business communication process, need preparation, and how to confirm business messages so that they can be received. At the preparatory stage, it begins by conveying a statement that is in accordance with the reality of the importance of the entrepreneurial message, in which it is also explained to align strategies and overcome various risks that may occur. Thus, the informant tries to become an honest entrepreneur, and can be trusted by consumers.

The second informant (11 June 2022) explained that he was professional in the business communication process. Informants realized that everyone has room to express their emotional side when making decisions, especially business decisions that have negative emotional sides that can hinder or even distance from business goals. Furthermore, the third informant (12 June 2022) argued that the purpose of doing business communication is not a personal goal, because it is important to manage emotions so that the entrepreneurial message conveyed is trusted, because as entrepreneurs try to be able to keep promises made to consumers. The third informant (June 12, 2022) argued that it is important to be tactical and efficient when carrying out business communications. Furthermore, the fourth informant argued that in a face-to-face meeting, either in the form of a presentation, or through other media such as video, it must be done on time. The fourth informant (17 June 2022), argued that being a good listener will give others the opportunity to express their opinion in a communication forum, so that a creative and collaborative environment will be created.

To improve entrepreneurial skills, the first informant (June 8, 2022) explained by providing mental strengthening and affirmation so that members have the drive to work hard, be administratively orderly, and encourage the management of Instagram as a medium for promoting products, by utilizing key features, such as Instagram stories, and direct messages. This opinion was strengthened by an informant who has a snack food business (22 June 2022) explaining the efforts of MSME administrators to improve the skills of members by providing entrepreneurial material in the form of using Instagram to promote products. Therefore, he tries to apply the material he has learned, including knowledge about Instagram management, the features provided by Instagram, so that

informants can use Instagram to promote products to the fullest. The obstacles faced in using Instagram include having to provide time when uploading activities, photos, and videos, problems on the network so that Instagram cannot be accessed, when uploading content to the media, and the lack of consumer knowledge in using Instagram, as well as the information presented. Instagram is very short, causing consumers to not understand the product information presented. To make it easy for consumers to contact, the informant conveys the contact number on Instagram. Based on the informant's explanation of the business communication process to improve member entrepreneurship, it is presented in Figure 3 as follows.

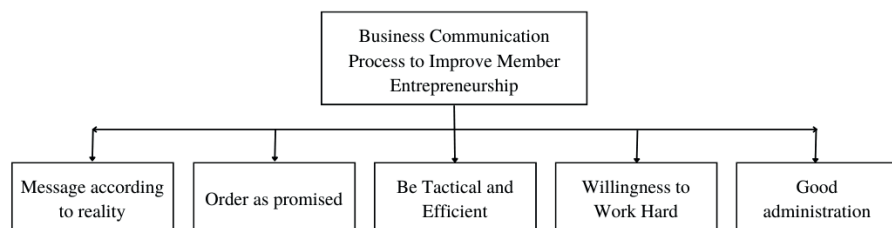


Figure 3: Business Communication Process To Improve Member Entrepreneurship.

The research findings are presented in Figure 3 regarding the business communication process to increase entrepreneurship, namely the encouragement to work hard, orderly administration, and managing Instagram as a medium in promoting products. The results of this study are in line with the research of Serumaga-Zake et al., (2005) who found that the level of education and work experience affect the performance of small businesses. The research findings regarding the management of Instagram as a medium in promoting products are in line with the research of Dahiya & Gayatri (2018) where the purchasing decision-making process is significantly influenced by digital marketing communications. Likewise, research by Melović et al., (2020) found that digital transformation affects digital marketing in business development, promotion and brand positioning. Busca & Bertrandias (2020) stated that the results of the research are that digital marketing is developing, and growing rapidly. Based on the research findings, the model of the findings of this study is presented in Figure 4 below.

5. Conclusion

First, personal selling as a means of marketing communication in the form of oral presentations in the form of conversations with potential customers. Oral presentation as a form is very helpful for companies in explaining products to consumers, potential consumers get to know the product, and the opportunity for consumers to buy is getting

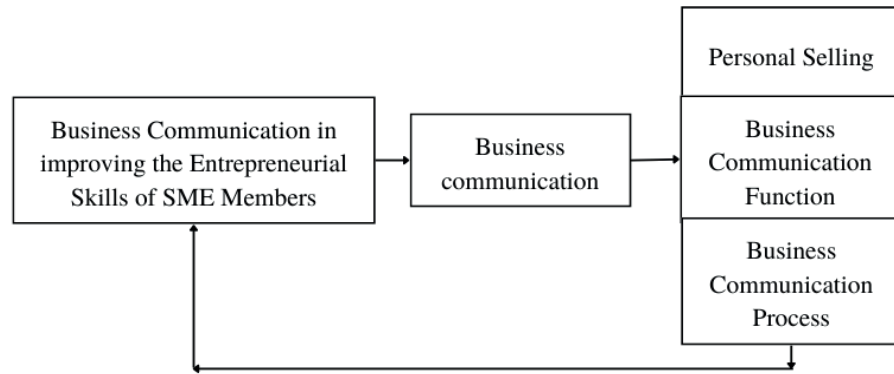


Figure 4: Model of Business Communication Research Findings in Improving Entrepreneurial Skills of SME Members.

bigger even though it is still in a state of social restrictions. Second, the business communication function is to inform products on Instagram, among others, by planning messages that are accurate, timely, and complete. Accurate information is compiled using words that describe the actual situation, such as product composition and the authenticity of raw materials. Third, the business communication process starts from the preparation stage by planning the message to be conveyed, managing emotions so that the entrepreneurial message conveyed can be achieved optimally, being tactical and efficient when carrying out business communications, and being an empathetic listener who provides opportunities for others to communicate. Opinion in a communication forum so that a creative and collaborative environment will be created.

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