



MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR OIL PALM SEEDLINGS IN ENHANCING BRAND AWARENESS AT THE OIL PALM RESEARCH CENTER (PPKS)

Zakiya Azzahra¹, Ahmad Tamrin Sikumbang²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Article Info

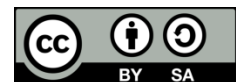
Keywords:

marketing communication strategy, brand awareness, oil palm seeds, institutional credibility, PPKS

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the marketing communication strategy of oil palm seedlings implemented by the Palm Oil Research Center (PPKS) in increasing brand awareness amidst agribusiness competition and the rampant circulation of illegal seedlings. This research is important because studies on marketing communications in the oil palm seed sector are still limited, while most previous studies have focused more on sales, general promotions, or marketing of consumer products, rather than on building brand awareness in the context of trust-based agribusiness. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation. The research informants numbered six people consisting of PPKS management and consumers/users of oil palm seedlings. The results show that PPKS implements an integrated marketing communication strategy through online and offline channels, including the use of social media, the MySawit application, direct services, interpersonal communication, and education to farmers about the advantages of superior seedlings and the importance of purchasing through official channels. These findings indicate that PPKS brand awareness is not only shaped by the intensity of promotions, but also by the institution's credibility, the quality of educational messages, and long-term relationships with consumers. The contribution of this research lies in the affirmation that in the agribusiness sector, an effective marketing communication strategy is not only informative, but must be able to integrate education, trust, and institutional legitimacy to strengthen the brand's position in the market.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Zakiya Azzahra
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
Email: zakiya0603221012@uinsu.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing communications is a strategic element in building relationships between organizations and the market. It is through these communications that companies convey information, shape perceptions, and influence consumer decisions regarding a product or brand. From a modern marketing perspective, communication is no longer understood simply as a promotional activity, but rather as an integrated process to inform, persuade, and remind consumers of a product's value on an ongoing basis (Kotler & Keller, 2016, as cited in Pahlevi, 2024). Therefore, the effectiveness of marketing communications is crucial for a

company's ability to differentiate itself, build trust, and strengthen its brand position amidst increasingly competitive markets (Hariyanto, 2023; Oktaviani et al., 2023).

The urgency of marketing communications is becoming increasingly apparent in the agribusiness sector, particularly in the marketing of oil palm seedlings, which relates not only to commercial aspects but also to quality, legitimacy, and consumer trust. Oil palm seeds are a production input that significantly determines crop productivity and the sustainability of plantation businesses. Therefore, consumer purchasing decisions are generally based not only on price but also on the institution's reputation, quality assurance, and product authenticity (Afrizon, 2023; Nasution et al., 2022). In this context, marketing communications have a more complex function: not only introducing the product but also educating the market so they can distinguish legal, high-quality seeds from products of unknown origin.

On the other hand, brand awareness is a crucial indicator in assessing the success of a marketing communications strategy. Brand awareness demonstrates consumers' ability to recognize, remember, and place a brand within a specific product category, making it more readily apparent in the purchasing decision-making process (Aaker, 2014; Rita & Nabilla, 2022). In practice, brand awareness is not formed instantly, but through exposure to consistent, relevant messages that build positive associations in consumers' minds. Therefore, organizations operating in the oil palm seedling sector require a communication strategy that is not only informative but also persuasive, educational, and able to affirm the institution's credibility in the market (Chusnaini, 2022; Yolanda, 2024).

The Indonesian Palm Oil Research Center (PPKS) is one of the institutions that holds a crucial position in providing superior oil palm seedlings in Indonesia. As a research institution and provider of planting materials with institutional legitimacy, PPKS not only sells products but also carries scientific authority that forms the basis of consumer trust. However, in marketing practice, this institutional advantage still requires an appropriate communication strategy to translate into strong brand awareness at the farmer, farmer group, cooperative, and plantation company levels. This challenge becomes even more relevant when the market also faces limited consumer literacy, competition from digital promotions, and the continued circulation of illegal seedlings, which has the potential to undermine trust in official products (Lubis, 2024).

Several previous studies have discussed marketing communication strategies and brand awareness, particularly in consumer products, retail businesses, and social media-based businesses. They have demonstrated that the use of digital media, integrated promotions, and educational content can strengthen brand recognition and consumer interest (Chusnaini, 2022; Noti et al., 2022; Yolanda, 2024). However, these studies generally focus on the general commercial sector and have not explored how marketing communication strategies are implemented in the context of trust-based agribusinesses such as oil palm seed marketing. Furthermore, there is limited research specifically examining brand awareness as a result of the integration of digital communication, interpersonal communication, and the credibility of research institutions. Thus, there is an empirical and conceptual gap that needs to be filled, particularly regarding how marketing communication strategies are implemented by superior seed providers to build brand awareness amidst the complexities of the agribusiness market.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the marketing communication strategies of oil palm seeds implemented by PPKS to increase consumer brand awareness. This research is important because it offers a more specific reading of marketing communications in the agribusiness sector, namely by placing market education, institutional credibility, and long-term relationships with consumers as integral parts of building brand awareness. Academically, this research is expected to enrich the study of marketing communications by presenting an empirical context that is still rarely discussed, while practically, the results can serve as a reference for agribusiness institutions in designing communication strategies that are more effective, credible, and adaptive to market dynamics.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research is the collection of data in a natural setting, using natural methods, and conducted by individuals or researchers with a natural interest (Ningnurani et al., 2022). This type of research utilizes descriptive research, which breaks down something into complex components (Moleong, 2022).

Research collects data using a method for gathering information, namely a research instrument. Similarly, a research instrument is a tool used to measure observed natural or social phenomena (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). In the qualitative research process, the researcher serves as the research instrument, as all required data are collected using observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. All of these techniques are carried out directly by the researcher.

Data collection techniques are a crucial step in research; therefore, a researcher must be skilled in collecting data to obtain valid data. Data can be obtained through interviews, documentation, and

observation. Observation is a data collection technique that involves direct observation of the research object. An interview is a direct, oral question-and-answer session between two or more people (Rais, 2025).

Using previously collected data, this data analysis technique is highly understandable. This study conducted this process by systematically organizing and searching data collected from previous research. To facilitate understanding, the data were analyzed according to the planning process using the Miles and Huberman model. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, separating, and transforming raw data as seen in written field notes. After the data reduction process is complete, the data presentation process is carried out to facilitate understanding. The data collected for this study will be presented in narrative text, and conclusions are drawn and verified as the final steps in the data analysis process. In this step, researchers draw conclusions from the various data collected to develop a theory based on the research findings (Millah et al., 2023).

This data validation technique emphasizes validity and reliability testing. Validity is a test used to assess the accuracy of a measuring instrument in measuring what it is supposed to measure, while reliability is an index test that indicates the extent to which a measuring instrument is reliable or trustworthy (Amanda et al., 2022). In this study, triangulation was utilized to assess data validity. Evaluating data from multiple sources at various times and using different methods is one form of triangulation in this credibility test. Therefore, there is triangulation of sources, data collection techniques, and time. Researchers in this study will utilize triangulation of sources and techniques.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Based on interviews with six informants, findings emerged regarding the marketing communications strategy implemented by the Palm Oil Research Center (PPKS) to increase brand awareness in the marketing of oil palm seedlings.

Based on interviews with six informants, this study found that PPKS's marketing communications strategy for increasing brand awareness is built through an integrated communication pattern between digital channels and direct interactions in the field. The findings indicate that PPKS relies not only on formal promotions but also combines social media, service apps, hotline communications, and direct visits to build rapport with consumers. One informant from management emphasized, *"We don't just introduce products through traditional promotions, but also through social media, the MySawit app, and direct services so that farmers can easily access official information."* This quote demonstrates that PPKS's marketing communications are implemented through a multi-channel strategy aimed at expanding reach while maintaining the credibility of information.

Further findings indicate that the use of digital media is a crucial element in strengthening PPKS's brand visibility among consumers. Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and the MySawit app are used not only to convey promotions but also to expedite the distribution of information about superior seedlings, ordering procedures, and official company services. One informant stated, *"Through social media, information reaches farmers more quickly. They can immediately learn about the product, how to order it, and the differences between official and unofficial seeds."* In this context, digital media serves as a communication channel that expands market access, especially for consumers who cannot be reached directly. This finding confirms that the presence of digital media in the PPKS marketing strategy is not merely complementary, but rather a core part of the process of building brand awareness.

In addition to media, this study also found that the content of the PPKS's marketing messages strongly emphasizes educational aspects. The messages go beyond promoting product advantages, but are also directed at building consumer understanding regarding seed quality, certification, legality, and the risks of purchasing illegal sprouts. An informant from a consumer group explained, *"What makes us confident is not just the product's reputation, but also the clear explanations from PPKS, especially regarding seed quality and the importance of purchasing from official channels."* This finding indicates that PPKS's marketing communications work through knowledge transfer, not simply information dissemination. In other words, the marketing messages delivered serve a dual purpose: introducing the brand while simultaneously shaping consumers' rational belief in the product's superiority.

This study also found that PPKS's brand awareness is relatively high. This is evident in the high level of consumer trust, the strong association of PPKS (Indonesian Palm Oil Suppliers) as an official supplier of superior seeds, and the tendency for consumers to make PPKS their primary choice when they need oil palm seeds. One informant stated, *"When we talk about official and trusted oil palm seeds, the first thing that comes to mind is PPKS. Even if we have to queue, we still choose them because we're confident in their quality."* This quote demonstrates that brand awareness extends beyond name recognition to top-of-

mind and purchasing preferences. Thus, PPKS's brand strength is built on a combination of the institution's reputation, consistent communication, and positive consumer experiences.

Despite this high level of brand awareness, this study also uncovered several obstacles impacting marketing effectiveness. Limited seedling production, long queues, and the widespread circulation of illegal seeds on social media are key challenges facing PPKS. One informant stated, *"Demand is high, but sometimes stock is limited, so consumers have to wait. Furthermore, on social media, many sellers claim to be selling superior seeds, even though their origins are unclear."* These findings indicate that successful marketing communications have not been fully matched by a well-developed distribution system and market control. As a result, high brand awareness has the potential to face the risk of decreased satisfaction if it is not accompanied by product availability and protection against misuse of the brand name or image.

In response to these challenges, the study found that PPKS implemented various corrective measures through strengthening consumer education, utilizing official channels, and providing post-purchase support. A PPKS informant emphasized, *"We continually remind consumers to purchase through official channels, check information from official accounts, and consult with them if they have any doubts about the products in circulation."* These efforts demonstrate that PPKS's marketing communications strategy extends beyond the promotional stage, but also extends to maintaining relationships with consumers and protecting market trust. Therefore, the results of this study indicate that increasing brand awareness at PPKS is built through the integration of digital media, direct communication, educational messages, institutional legitimacy, and a strategy for sustainably maintaining consumer trust.

Discussion

The research results show that the marketing communications strategy implemented by PPKS reflects integrated marketing communication (IMC) practices, namely the integrated use of various communication channels to convey a consistent message to consumers. The integration of digital media such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and the MySawit app with direct communication through field visits and a hotline demonstrates that PPKS does not rely solely on a single communication channel but rather builds a complementary communication ecosystem. This aligns with Kotler and Keller's perspective, which emphasizes that marketing communications is a strategic process to inform, persuade, and remind consumers directly and indirectly (Kotler & Keller, 2016, as cited in Pahlevi, 2024). Thus, these findings reinforce the belief that the effectiveness of marketing communications lies in an organization's ability to integrate various media, not simply the intensity of promotions.

The use of digital media in PPKS's strategy demonstrates an adaptation to changing consumer behavior in the digital era. Social media serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a space for rapid, broad, and real-time interaction and information distribution. These findings align with the concept of digital marketing communication, which emphasizes the importance of audience engagement in building long-term relationships between brands and consumers (Chusnaini, 2022). In this context, PPKS's use of digital media contributes to increased brand visibility while expanding access to information for farmers, its primary target. Thus, digital communication not only increases market reach but also strengthens the brand's position in an increasingly digitalized public space (Yolanda, 2024).

Beyond the media aspect, the research findings confirm that the primary strength of PPKS's marketing communication strategy lies in its educational messaging. This approach demonstrates that marketing communications in the agribusiness sector cannot be equated with those for ordinary consumer products, as purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by consumers' levels of knowledge and trust. From a marketing communication theory perspective, effective messages are not only informative but also capable of shaping consumers' understanding and attitudes toward the product (Oktaviani et al., 2023). These findings expand on this concept by showing that, in the context of oil palm seedlings, educational communication serves as a product legitimization mechanism and a strategy to reduce the risk of purchasing errors due to the circulation of illegal products.

The high brand awareness of PPKS found in this study can be explained through Aaker's brand awareness theory, which states that brand awareness encompasses consumers' ability to recognize and remember a brand to the point of reaching the top-of-mind level (Aaker, 2014). In the case of PPKS, brand awareness is formed not only through communication exposure but also through consumer experience and the institution's reputation as a credible research institution. This suggests that brand awareness in the agribusiness sector has more complex characteristics, as it is influenced by rational factors such as product quality and scientific legitimacy, rather than solely emotional or symbolic aspects (Rita & Nabilla, 2022). Thus, these findings enrich the study of brand awareness by positioning institutional credibility as a key variable in the formation of brand awareness.

However, this study also found an imbalance between high market demand and limited production and distribution capacity. From a marketing theory perspective, this situation indicates a gap between communication and the company's operational performance. An effective communication strategy can increase demand, but without the support of an adequate distribution system, it has the potential to reduce consumer satisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Furthermore, the widespread circulation of illegal seeds suggests that marketing communications must be accompanied by a brand protection strategy, as external threats can influence consumer perceptions of product quality and authenticity (Noti et al., 2022). Therefore, marketing communications cannot stand alone but must be integrated with production and distribution management.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the PPKS marketing communications strategy is effective in increasing brand awareness because it integrates digital media, interpersonal communication, and educational messages based on institutional credibility. These findings provide a theoretical contribution by confirming that in the agribusiness context, effective marketing communications depend not only on the promotional mix but also on the ability to build trust through education and institutional legitimacy. Furthermore, this research also shows that brand awareness in this sector is formed through the simultaneous interaction of communication, product quality, and consumer experience. Therefore, a marketing communications strategy focused on education and long-term relationships is key to strengthening a brand's position in a trust-based market.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the PPKS marketing communication strategy is effective in increasing brand awareness because it is built through the integration of digital channels and direct communication, reinforced by educational messages, and supported by the institution's credibility as an official and trusted producer of superior seeds. This finding confirms the theoretical contribution that in the agribusiness context, the formation of brand awareness is not sufficiently explained by the intensity of promotion, but also through a combination of market education, institutional legitimacy, and long-term relationships with consumers. Practically, the results of this study indicate that seed marketing institutions or similar agribusiness sectors need to develop communication strategies that are not only informative and persuasive, but also capable of building trust, protecting brands from the circulation of illegal products, and supported by production and distribution readiness to ensure market expectations can be met. The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which focuses on a single institution and a limited number of informants. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the object of study to other agribusiness institutions, compare communication strategies between seed producers, or examine in more depth the relationship between marketing communications, consumer trust, and brand loyalty in the context of the broader agribusiness market.

References

- [1] Abdul, I. 2023. Merancang Kelapa Sawit Sebagai Komoditi Unggulan Nasional. (R. Aqli, Ed.) (1 ed.). Malang: PT. Literasi Nusantara Abadi Grup.
- [2] Afrizon. 2023. PERTUMBUHAN BIBIT KELAPA SAWIT (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq.) DENGAN PEMBERIAN PUPUK ORGANIK DAN ANORGANIK. *AGRITEPA*, 3(2), 95-105.
- [3] Amanda, L. ... Devianto, D. 2022. PARTISIPASI POLITIK MASYARAKAT KOTA PADANG, VIII(1), 179-188.
- [4] Ardiansyah ... Jailani, M. S. 2023. Teknik Pengumpulan Data Dan Instrumen Penelitian Ilmiah Pendidikan Pada Pendekatan Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif, 1-9.
- [5] Chusnaini, A. 2022. Social Media Marketing: Social Media Content, Brand Image, Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention. *Jurnal Akuntansi dan Manajemen*, 6(2).
- [6] Hariyanto, D. 2023. Komunikasi Pemasaran. (F. A. Darma & M. T. Multazam, Ed.) (1 ed.). Sidoarjo: UMSIDA Press.
- [7] Hasani, I. 2024. Membangun Lingkungan yang Mendukung Pertumbuhan dan Pembelajaran : Studi Kasus Sekolah Ramah Anak di SDIT AR- Rahmaniyyah Depok Imam Hasani, 4(3), 257-274.
- [8] Lubis, R. A. 2024. Analisis Strategi Pemasaran Dalam Meningkatkan Penjualan Bibit Tanaman PPKS MARIHAT, 2(3), 248-255.
- [9] Millah, A. S. ... Ramdhani, E. 2023. Analisis Data dalam Penelitian Tindakan Kelas, 1(2), 140-153.
- [10] Moleong, L. J. 2022. Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. (I. Taufik, Ed.) (41 ed.). Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- [11] Nasution, H. H. ... Lahay, R. R. 2022. Pertumbuhan Bibit Kelapa Sawit (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq .) Pada Berbagai Perbandingan Media Tanam Sludge dan tandan Kosong Kelapa Sawit (TKKS) Di PreeNursery pree Nur sersey, 2(2337), 1419-1425.
- [12] Ningnurani ... Widianoro, F. W. 2022. Studi Kasus Penderita Skizofrenia Paranoid, 18(1), 25-29.
- [13] Noti, F. B. ... Setiamandani, E. D. 2022. Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran Kae Thai Tea dalam Meningkatkan Brand Awareness, 3(1), 33-43.
- [14] Nurfajriani, W. V. ... Afgani, M. W. 2024. Triangulasi Data Dalam Analisis Data Kualitatif, 10(September), 826-833.
- [15] Oktaviani, A. ... Firmansyah, R. 2023. Peranan Media Sosial Facebook dalam Meningkatkan Komunikasi Pemasaran di Era Digital, 2(2), 143-150.
- [16] Pahlevi, M. R. 2024. Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran dalam Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Konsumen pada PT Albis Nusa Wisata di Jakarta. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 2(4).
- [17] Rais, A. 2025. Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Budaya Sekolah Melalui Pembelajaran IPS di SD Negeri 105292 Bandar Klippa. Universitas Negeri Medan.
- [18] Rita, dan Nabilla, S. F. 2022. Pengaruh Social Media Advertising dan Event Marketing terhadap Brand Awareness dan Dampaknya pada Purchase Intention Produk Tenue de Attire. *Jurnal Ekonomi & Ekonomi Syariah*, 5(1), 426-437.
- [19] Yolanda, S. D. 2024. Strategi Digital Marketing dalam Meningkatkan Brand Awareness pada Grosir Olshop dengan Metode N . Vivo, 1, 152-161.
- [20] Zailani, M. N. ... Kifli, F. W. 2022. ANALISIS STRATEGI PEMASARAN BIBIT PADA PUSAT PENELITIAN KELAPA SAWIT (PPKS) DI SUMATERA UTARA. Institut Pertanian Stiper Yogyakarta.
- [21] Khairifa, F., Kholil, S., Syam, AM & Mujtahid, NM. (2025). Mitigating food waste and household waste management: The potential for redistributing surplus food in the policy communication of Medan City government. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 1445 (1), 012047
- [22] Masrek , M. N. ., Baharuddin , M. F. ., & Syam , A. M. . (2025). Determinants of Behavioral Intention to Use Generative AI: The Role of Trust, Personal Innovativeness, and UTAUT II Factors. *International Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 14(4), 378-390. <https://doi.org/10.14419/44tk8615>
- [23] Saraan, M. I. K., Rambe, R. F. A. K., Syam, A. M., Suhendar, A., Dalimunthe, M. A., & Sinaga, R. P. K. (2024, May). The application of fertilizer subsidies in the context of coffee plantations in Pollung Sub-District, Humbang Hasundutan District, North Sumatra Province. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* (Vol. 1352, No. 1, p. 012012). IOP Publishing.
- [24] Fahrurnissa, AR & Syam, AM. (2025). Marketing Communication Strategy Analysis at Slice Coffee Medan in Attracting Customer Interest. *Journal Analytica Islamica* 14 (1)
- [25] Ramadhana, RA & Syam, AM. (2025). Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran Digital Dalam Meningkatkan Brand Awareness Pada Brand Wardah Beauty. *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, dan Humaniora* 9 (2), 1071-1079