



SOCIAL MEDIA UTILIZATION IN B2B MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN PALM OIL PLANTATION RESEARCH SERVICES

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Abstrak

The power of social media is utilized by salespeople in shaping an organization's brand image and marketing communications, including B2B organizations. As a commercial Research Institute, SRS utilizes social media like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn in conducting marketing communications and also expanding their market reach. This study is conducted in order to know the influence of social media engagement, especially Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, on sales in B2B companies. The data that is used for this study is data for two years which is data from January 2019 - December 2020. The results show that social media engagement (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) jointly affects sales at SRS. Meanwhile, the result of a partial analysis of each SRS social media online engagement (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) show that social media like Facebook does not affect SRS sales, while other social media like Instagram and LinkedIn significantly affect SRS sales.

Kata Kunci: Social Media, Online Engagement, B2B, Marketing

PENDAHULUAN

The business competition that is getting tighter in the era of globalization must be addressed by business owners/entrepreneurs by implementing strategic steps for the continuity of their business. One of the steps that must be taken is business owners must be able to adapt to the development of science and information technology (Haerisma, 2018). The changes that are rapid especially in the digital world and the information sources that can be accessed through computer networks and the internet leads to changes in marketing (Sweeney, 2005). The latest statistical data shows that the internet users nowadays are more than 5 billion people or 64 percent of total population in the world (Internet World Stats 2021). Meanwhile, according to the Global Web Index, the number of Internet users in Indonesia as of January 2021 is 202.6 million users, an increase of 16 percent compared to 2020 (Kemp, 2021). Furthermore, he stated that 170 million of them using social media which means 61.8 percent of population in Indonesia. This number of active social media users in Indonesia has grown by 10 million users or around 6.3 percent compared to 2020. The social media platform most used by Indonesians is YouTube, followed by Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Kemp, 2021). Furthermore, it was conveyed that 60 percent of social media users use it for work such as establishing relationships and running businesses.

In the last few years, the media has undergone a very big change where nowadays people prefer to use other media such as television, radio, and magazines to seek information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Meanwhile, Chauhan & Pilai, (2013) stated that social networking by using online media could be perceived as various sources of digital information that has been initiated,

created, circulated and consumed by the internet users in order to share product knowledge, services, brands, personalities and also issues. The fact that social media has changed the way we communicate which previously was using one-way communication to a multidimensional two-way communication (Berthon, *et al.*, 2012). Currently, several companies have begun to realize the need to focus on developing two-way communication with consumers to encourage interaction (Bernoff & Li, 2011).

Empirical evidence shows that social media adoption can provide significant benefits to corporate organizations. Qurniawati, (2018) said that marketing communication tool that widely use is social media, because of its potential in spreading messages. Social media offers new ways for both the companies and customers to engage with one another. Therefore, social media communications that company creates are also considered an important marketing mix aspect of the company (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Knowing this potential creates the expectation of marketing people that their social media communications can help to connect with loyal consumers and also influence consumer perceptions of the products, spreading information and also learning about their audience (Brie, *et al.*, 2013). Rohaeni (2016) stated that the dissemination of messages is very important in introducing a product and also attracting consumers to buy the product. By spreading the message, consumers will know more about the products produced by the company. Narayana & Rahanatha, (2020) also stated that the spreading of messages through social media has an influence on consumer purchasing decisions which is positive and significant.

The power of social media is utilized by marketing people in shaping the brand image of an organization, including B2B organizations. B2B marketing strategy is similar to B2C. Sitoresmi, (2021) suggested that a B2B marketing communication plan should be made like B2C, with the objective, main message, implementation and evaluation outlined at the beginning. However, B2B should set the objective to generate a two-way exchange with the business as many as possible, create engagement, meaning, and facilitating feedback (Smith, 2012). In the recent time, marketing communications and branding have come up as important management fields in B2B marketing (Mäläskä, *et al*, 2011). This become more common for market-minded practitioners to communicate brands through content sharing, which gives contribution to interaction of B2B (Andersen, 2005; Bruhn, *et al*, 2013). In addition, trust is very important in the digital era, so that customers from various locations can feel comfortable and confident in using the service and product of a company (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

One of the B2B organizations in Indonesia that utilize social media is Sulung Research Station (SRS) as one of the palm oil plantation research institute located in Central Kalimantan. SRS is here to provide services in the form of fertilizer recommendations and technical culture for palm oil plantations. In the implementation of its operational activities, SRS is supported by the latest technology, competent and experienced human resources and laboratories that have been accredited by the National Accreditation Committee (KAN) for ISO / IEC 17025: 2017. SRS is a B2B organization because the products they offer are services that are destined for the business interests of other companies.

The palm oil business is one of the plantation commodities that have an important role in national economic activities, regional economic development, poverty reduction and environmental conservation in Indonesia. Palm oil is also one of Indonesia's largest export commodities as a source of foreign exchange in the form of crude palm oil (CPO) after oil and gas. Until 2019, the area of palm oil plantations is estimated to be around 14.60 million hectares with CPO production of 48.42 million tons (BPS, 2020). Along with the enormous amount of CPO production, Indonesia has become the palm oil largest producer and exporter of in the world. In terms of productivity, Indonesian palm oil tends to fluctuate from year to year but has relatively increased. In 2019 it is estimated that it will increase by 12.92 percent compared to 2018 to 48.42 million tons (BPS, 2020). The rapid increase of palm oil production in Indonesia is inseparable from the role of the Research Institute in providing services in the form of fertilizer recommendations and palm oil plantation technical culture.

As a commercial Research Institute, SRS utilizes social media Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn in conducting marketing communications and expanding market reach. Measuring the benefits of social media is a very topical issue in social media research in general, and has been the subject of research in recent years (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Therefore, the case study in this study is problem formulation of how social media utilization by SRS to conduct B2B marketing communications and linking it to the sales data of the palm oil plantation research institute's services. This study aims to find out more about social media and its impact

primarily from the innovation of B2B and also to find out the possibility to utilize social media for this sector by creating a comprehensive picture.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Media in Business-to-Business

One of the media that has easy access and the right media for marketing is social media (Zarella, 2010). Social media is described as the use of the internet and the use of other interactive technologies to create and connect a dialogue between identified companies and consumers (Coviello, *et al.*, 2001). Along with that, Pamungkas & Zuhroh, (2016) defined that social media is a tool of digital marketing that can reach all groups, at relatively affordable costs or no cost and is used to create a community, build relationships, and exchange information with fellow social media users for an unlimited period of time. By using social media can reduce promotional costs and expand the reach and is easily accessible in promoting products compared to conventional product marketing (Ahmed & Zahid, 2014 ; Pane, 2014).

In addition, social media also plays a very important role in developing business organizations, especially with things that related to brands, product types and product specifications as an attraction for consumers (Bruhn, *et al.*, 2012; Schultz & Peltier, 2013). According to (Mahmudah & Rahayu, 2020), social media allows changes in companies in terms of communicating with consumers, how to market services or goods to consumers to build good relationships with consumers. The development of a business organization (company) is supported by various factors ranging from human resources (employees), capital, production and marketing results and the ability to follow market share and what is needed

by consumers (Rosmadi, 2018). The synergy between marketing and information technology usage (social media) are able to improve the performance of business organizations (Kappelman, *et al.*, 2014). In addition, social media is also played as an important component in marketing strategy in every business transaction from small organizations to large organizations (Romdonny & Rosmadi, 2018).

The utilization of social media is now also reaching the business-to-business (B2B) sector (Vasudevan & Kumar, 2018). This has implications for how, when and where B2B marketers interact with their customers (Schultz, *et al.*, 2012). Companies in the B2B context of social media usage as a communication tool to improve customer relationships, support sales and build their brands, as searching and finding information tools also product services (Andersson & Wikström, 2017). According to (Kholisoh & Mahampang, 2017), the use of online media in Business to Business (B2B) can be interpreted as an online business communication system between business people or it can be said that a transaction occurs between a company and another company.

Companies that have implemented the utilization of social media in their business have several different marketing activities, for example; creating brand awareness, promoting business offerings and increasing interactivity and hence building relationships with customers (Järvinen, *et al.*, 2012; Agnihotri, *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, B2B organizations that have adopted and implemented social media into their marketing work and started measuring marketing performance using web analytical measurement practices have

experienced an increase in meeting marketing objectives (Järvinen & Karjaluoto, 2015; Järvinen & Taminen, 2016). In addition, studies on the use of social media applications (also referred to as applications) for marketing have been beneficial for marketing work as a whole (Wang, *et al.*, 2016)

Online Engagement

Shen & Bissel, (2013) stated that online engagement is an interaction between two or more people towards a brand on social media. Meanwhile, according to (Vries, *et al.*, 2012) said that online engagement is communication on social media to a brand that allows changes in customer behavior, from ordinary customers to loyal customers then to customers who are willing to recommend a brand. With online engagement, one can know the success of a brand on social media, because online engagement shows how much the user responds to a brand on social media (Hollebeek, 2011).

Online Engagement is very relevant in terms of communication on social media, because social media is a relationship centric and participatory, engagement in social media naturally becomes a meaningful relationship. Communicating through walls on social media allows users to interact with brands by commenting on the brand, expressing likes or dislikes, and sharing content with their social connections (Moore & McElroy, 2012). A post with many likes can indicate that a content is said to be interesting, increase the likelihood of being liked by someone, and lead to the dissemination of information from a brand to potential customers (Coelho, *et al.*, 2016).

Number of comments that is available in a post represents the level of success or influence because by commenting on social media means it

makes the user take their time to express their opinions. Likes and comments have been widely used as a measure of the impact of a publication (Bonsos & Ratkai, 2013). A post with many likes can indicate that a content is said to be interesting, increase the likelihood of being liked by someone, and lead to the dissemination of information from a brand to potential customers (Moore & McElroy, 2012). Online engagement is important because the more online engagement you get, the more likely it is for a brand to be known. In addition, online engagement is also important because it can show good relationships with consumers and have an impact on consumer loyalty (Sabate, *et al.*, 2014).

Sales on business to business (B2B)

B2B organizations often have few customers and need to use IT systems to manage their relationships (Chang, 2014). B2B organizations often have fewer customers and must use IT systems to manage relationships, but the adoption and implementation of new technologies is due to the complexity of the multi-step B2B sales process. (Siamangka, *et al.*, 2015 ; Rodriguez, *et al.*, 2016). Sales is an absolute requirement for the continuity of a business, because with sales, profits will be obtained. The higher the sales, the more profit you will get. Sales is a part of promotion and promotion is a part of the overall marketing program (Swastha, 2014 ; Thamrin & Tantri, 2016). According to Kotler, (2012) selling is a managerial social process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want, create and offer products of value with others.

How to create long-term relationships with customers through the company's products or services, so that sales means a tactic that can integrate the company, customers, and

the relationship between the two (Kertajaya, 2006). Sales are aimed at finding buyers, influencing and giving instructions so that buyers can adjust their needs to the products offered and enter into agreements regarding prices that are profitable for both parties (Yoeti, 2013). Therefore, making a sale is an activity aimed at finding buyers, influencing, and giving buyers so that purchases can adjust their needs to the products offered and enter into agreements regarding prices that benefit both parties (Assauri, 2011). Meanwhile, Andzulis, *et al.*, (2012) refers to the stages of the sales process and includes follow-up activities after the end of sales. Ultimately, the stages are customer acquisition, outreach, understanding customer needs, business opportunities, solution presentations, ending the sale, and following up with the end customer.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses quantitative methods. Quantitative methods can be interpreted as research methods based on the philosophy of positivism by collecting data using research instruments and statistical data analysis with the aim of testing the established hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2008). This study consists of two variables such as the independent variable and the dependent variable. An Independent variable is a variable that is affecting or causing the change or the emergence of the dependent variable where the independent variable is the interaction value on the SRS social media (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn). Meanwhile, in this study, the dependent variable is the sales data of SRS services. The data analysis technique in this study used multiple linear regression analysis. This analysis is conducted to determine the influence of online engagement on each of the social media managed by SRS such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn as

independent variables and SRS service sales data as the dependent variable. The data used is data for two years which is from January 2019 - December 2020.

Research Hypothesis

After all, the requirements for researching a regression model are met, the next step is to find out whether the proposed hypothesis is accepted or not, namely by conducting a simultaneous test (F test) and a significance test (T test) (Sulistiyono & Sulistiyowati, 2017). The test is carried out using the help of IBM SPSS Statistics 24. The F test is conducted to determine whether all independent variables have a significant influence on the dependent variable. The F test hypothesis is :

H0 : There is no influence of social media engagement on sales

H1 : There is an influence of social media engagement on sales

While the T test is conducted to determine whether in the regression model, the independent variables partially have a significant influence on the dependent variable. The T-Test Hypothesis is:

H0 : There is no influence of social media Facebook engagement on sales

H1 : There is an influence of social media Facebook engagement on sales

H0 : There is no influence of social media Instagram engagement on sales

H1 : There is an influence of social media Instagram engagement on sales

H0 : There is no influence of social media LinkedIn engagement on sales

H1 : There is an influence of social media LinkedIn engagement on sales

Determination of Multiple Linear Regression Model

The next step is to determine the coefficients or regression parameters using the least squares method (Walpole, *et al.*, 2011). The least squares method will obtain a system of linear equations that can be formed into matrix multiplication. Calculation of the value of the regression coefficient is done by completing the system solution. The solution of the system can be found using Gaussian elimination (Anton & Rorres, 2005). After that, the goodness of the regression model can be measured from the value of the coefficient of determination (R²) (Widiyawati & Setiawan, 2015). The value of the coefficient of determination ranges from 0 to 1. If the value is close to 1, it can be said that the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable is large. This means that the model used is good to explain the influence of these variables (Ndruru, *et al.*, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

B2B is all about relationships, companies dealing with other companies but in reality it's also about business people dealing with other businesses. Social media in the B2B environment needs to be explored to reveal marketing and sales opportunities for this B2B company. This is done by SRS to improve sales performance through communication with social media networks. The results of the analysis of the coefficient of determination show the percentage of the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. The value of the coefficient of determination can be obtained from the value of R². This study obtained an R² value of 0.232 (Table 1). This means that

only 23.2% of SRS sales can be explained by the social media engagement value variable (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn), while most of the other 76.8% of sales can be explained by other variables. The small value of R² is due to other factors that influence the SRS sales variable. In practice factors such as price, place and product also affect sales (Dunan, *et al.*, 2020).

Table 1. The value of the coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,482 ^a	0,232	0,117	474,635

a. Predictors: (Constant), Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn

Based on the F test, it shows that an F value of 2.02 with a probability of 0.044, because the probability is smaller than 0.05, it can be concluded that the independent variables (social media engagement like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) jointly affect sales. SRS (Table 2). This is in line with the results of research conducted by Nurgiyantoro, (2014) which states that promotion through social media has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions with a regression coefficient value of 0.792 and purchasing decisions are influenced by promotion strategies through social media by 34%.

Table 2. F Statistical Test Results

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.362.720,17	3	454.240,06	2,02	0,044 ^b
Residual	4.505.569,45	20	225.278,47		
Total	5.868.289,63	23			

* P-Value 5%

The results of this study are in line with Rodriguez, et al., (2016) who also conducted research related to the use of social media, sales ability and performance, where it is also known social media supports the sales process and generates profits for the business. So there is a connection between the use and sale of social media. Social media has helped marketing and sales professionals connect with prospects and customers, as well as other interested parties. Social media enables online content sharing, facilitates social interactions, and develops online networks (Agnihotri, et al., 2012). Furthermore, social media has enabled the sharing of online content, facilitated online interactions and developed online networks. (Agnihotri, et al., 2012).

Marketers need to learn how to use social media to support their sales and build relationships with their customers (Trainor, et al., 2014). Some studies have shown that the use of social media is beneficial in increasing sales and that its use contributes to organizational results (Rodriguez, et al., 2012; Marshall, et al., 2012). Furthermore, the use of social media and sales activities are important for building

good business-consumer relationships and conducting B2B negotiations (Rapp, et al., 2013). The use of social media is a strategy that can be applied in a B2B context to understand and develop customer relationships (Chang, 2014).

Social media is known to have an influence on sales in B2B companies such as SRS, but it is necessary to know which social media has an effect on sales through online engagement of each social media owned by SRS (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn). Based on the results of the T test, the T value for social media Facebook engagement is -1.013 with a probability of 0.323, the T value for Instagram is -1.912 with a probability of 0.030 and the T value for LinkedIn is 2.252 with a 0.036 probability. Based on this value, Facebook social media does not affect SRS sales because probability is greater than 0.05. Meanwhile, Instagram and LinkedIn have a significant effect on SRS sales, this is because they have a probability value less than 0.05 (Table 3). These results can be used as a model in multiple linear regression equations, which is as follows:

$$\text{Sales} = 2.287,121 - 1,982 \text{ Facebook} - 7,362 \text{ Instagram} + 0,892 \text{ LinkedIn} + e$$

Table 3. T Statistical Test Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2287,121	864,530		2,646	0,016
Facebook	-1,982	1,957	-0,730	-1,013	0,323
Instagram	-7,362	3,851	-5,203	-1,912	0,030
LinkedIn	0,892	0,396	5,994	2,252	0,036

* P-Value 5%

Brennan, (2012) said that LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, are considered as the main social media for B2B marketing. Meanwhile, (Bocconcelli, et al., 2017; Andersson & Wikstrom, 2017) said that Facebook, Instagram and Youtube are social media that have a strong influence on B2B marketing. Digital marketing activities on Instagram can be seen in the branding aspect that is executed through content, tone feeds, captions/language styles, and hashtags (Lesmana & Valentina, 2021). These things are done by SRS marketers in utilizing Instagram social media to get high online engagement and ultimately affect sales.

LinkedIn of SRS social media is also known to have a significant influence on sales, this shows that the B2B target audience is similar to the LinkedIn audience. In B2B, companies do not only reach customers but also all stakeholders ranging from investors, employees, partners, suppliers, competitors, regulators to community members (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007). Meanwhile, according to Lipinska, (2019) it is known that LinkedIn is used to increase awareness, build a professional image, increase website traffic and build engagement. The strategies for using LinkedIn in B2B are building relationships, understanding prospects, self-selecting certain prospects, attracting prospects to certain brands, and listening to clients (Witzig, et al., 2012). LinkedIn social media has its own advantages compared to other social media, which the target audience is well defined, including business partners and employees (Sitoresmi, 2021). That is why when a corporate organization decides to use LinkedIn, the delivery of messages and audience engagement will be more appropriate and will ultimately increase sales in B2B. Finally, using social media during the sales process will

benefit your organization (Bocconcelli, et al., 2017; Andersson & Wikstrom, 2017).

In addition, content marketing, market research, prospecting, and networking are the main things in the utilization of B2B social media. This is in line with (Wang, et al., 2019) which shows that marketing content on social media can be effective in bringing sales prospects and winning opportunities in the B2B business and has a complementary role for salespeople. In content marketing through social media, marketing people of B2B should strive to provide business-related content that attracts customers (and possibly other stakeholders) so that it will affect online engagement. According to Suparman & Fathurrahman, (2021), in his research, he said that in creating social media engagement, interaction should be prioritized, because the interaction dimension is known to be more dominant than other targets. To achieve this target so as to create engagement through the use of social media, companies are required to be creative and innovative in order to influence consumers through various content created, such as videos, photos, and text messages. These results are corroborated by the study of Wang & McCarthy, (2021) showing that persuasive content can create more responses from the audience in the form of responding by pressing the like button or emoji-shaped responses, while informative content is more dominant in generating responses in the form of comments and questions. These things should be paid more attention to by SRS as a B2B company that utilizes and increases online engagement of social media Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn in sales and marketing activities, which in turn will affect the company's profit.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of data analysis and research that has been done, research on the utilization of social media in B2B marketing communications at the Sulung Research Station can be concluded as follow:

Social media engagement (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) has an effect on sales at SRS. This is proven by the F value of 2.02 with a probability of 0.044. Then H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, meaning that the social media Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn used by SRS have a significant influence on sales in B2B companies. Meanwhile, the results of a partial analysis of each SRS social media engagement (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) show that Facebook does not affect SRS sales because it has a probability greater than 0.05 (0.323). Meanwhile, Instagram and LinkedIn have a significant effect on SRS sales, this is because they have a probability value that is smaller than 0.05 (0.030 and 0.036). This means that social media Instagram and LinkedIn partially affect sales of B2B businesses at SRS. The use of social media is not only a selling and supporting technology, but also an important part of creating shared value. Future research has the potential to improve understanding of interactions between businesses and the general public, allowing them to better measure audience engagement during the sales process.

Limitations and evaluation of the study

This study has set the limitation which is the type of social media used which are three social media such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Although there are several other studies on more types of social media, the study conducted by SRS can be a potential contribution for future studies. The conceptual background for this study is the use of social media in B2B sales and

is based on studies conducted at SRS, but comprehensive studies on other types of social media have not been conducted. This study tries to look at the big picture, primarily outlining the connection between B2B sales and social media, based on what is considered the most valued literature and studies available on social media. This study is aimed to provide insight into how B2B companies can leverage social media.

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