

## COMMUNICATION IN PERSONAL SELLING ACTIVITIES OF MSMEs ACTORS

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**

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*Seeing the condition of MSMEs with limited human resources in the use of media and technology, most MSME players mostly practice personal sales. Personal selling is an alternative because it is considered to be enough to reduce promotional costs. Personal selling is direct or face-to-face communication between sellers and potential customers to introduce a product to potential customers and form customer understanding of the product so that they will then try and become customers. MSMEs in Taman Sub-district of Sidoarjo is a group of MSMEs that has a large membership, with more than 20 active members who have production activities ranging from food and beverages, handicrafts and others. The activities of members of the human resource development of MSME actors are carried out at the secretariat which was donated by the head of Taman Sub-district for the activities of business actors. Usually the activities they carry out are about improving the skills to produce certain goods, training in proposing halal certificates, training from agencies and universities. The training provided is based on the needs of the MSME actors themselves, starting from packaging training, finding capital partners, product photos, product videos. MSME actors generally have basic skills in production and promoting their products, but they still do it independently. Although efforts to partner with various parties are made to market MSME products, in the end, Taman sub-district MSME players prefer to market their products by personal selling. Personal selling activities are more efficient and effective, no need to depend on uncertain cooperation offers from their partners. Therefore, this research will look at how communication in personal selling activities by MSME players in Sidoarjo with a qualitative approach and phenomenological method*

### INTRODUCTION

The high public interest in the small business sector is increasing from year to year (Yayan Sudaryana, Febrianto Hermawan, Nurbaety Nurbaety, Deviana Oktorina, 2022), However, this high public interest is not matched by the skills to manage and develop their business. MSMEs are one of the community's economic activities that require development in their business. Medium enterprises are productive economic businesses that stand alone, which are carried out by individuals or business entities that are not subsidiaries or branches of companies that are owned, controlled, or are part of either directly or indirectly with small businesses or large businesses with a total net worth or annual sales as regulated in law (Pemerintah Pemprov Jatim, 2021) Business development includes products, production mechanisms, marketing strategies, operations, human resources, collaboration and finance. This aspect of development can be optimized when MSMEs can implement marketing to the fullest (Bin Hasri, Sigit Santoso, 2017). However, in Indonesia, MSME marketing practices are still low even though MSMEs have an important role in the local and national economy (Munawar1 et al., 2016). In general, the quality of human resources or MSME actors has the ability to produce on a small scale, with good production quality but unfortunately still not skilled in optimizing product

marketing. MSME actors are also slow in using technology because in general small business actors do not have good business management and qualified human resources in the use of communication and information technology (Cut Geminia A.R, 2018). In marketing communication activities, limited human resources are not a barrier to displaying excellent product performance, maximum marketing performance can be done by carrying a strong brand, good service, profit, loyalty and others. MSMEs have not realized the importance of communicating the added value of the products they produce so that sales are still limited (Lila Bismala, 2016). Many small businesses complain that some big brands seem to have unlimited resources. They spend seemingly endless promotional funds. Conversely, marketers of big brands also complain that their brands are successful because of the huge budgets they have and not because of their ingenuity (Hermawan, 2012). This means that MSME players who realize their limitations must be more ingenious, one way is by communicating products to consumers. Communicating MSME products is a marketing communication activity, the way can be by carrying out digital advertising, direct promotion, or utilizing collaboration with certain agencies, direct marketing, personal selling and others that allow sales to reach consumers or a wider market share (Shimp A Terence, 2014). Seeing the condition of MSMEs with limited human resources in the use of media and technology, most MSME players practice more personal sales. Personal selling is an alternative because it is considered to be enough to reduce promotional costs. Personal *selling* is direct or face-to-face communication between sellers and potential customers to introduce a product to potential customers and form customer understanding of the product so that they will then try and become customers.

In carrying out personal selling activities, you cannot ignore the personal approach strategy. MSMEs in Taman Sidoarjo Sub-district is a group of MSMEs that has a large membership, there are more than 20 members who actively have food and beverage production activities. The activities of members of the human resource development of MSME actors are carried out at the secretariat which is donated by the sub-district for the activities of business actors. Usually the activities they carry out are about improving the skills to produce certain goods, training in proposing halal certificates, training from agencies and universities. The training provided is based on the needs of the MSME actors themselves, starting from packaging training, finding capital partners, product photos, product videos. MSME actors generally have basic skills in production and promoting their products, but they still do it independently. Although efforts to partner with various parties are made to market MSME products, in the end, Taman sub-district MSME players prefer to market their products by *personal selling*. *Personal selling* activities are more efficient and effective, there is no need to depend on uncertain cooperation offers from their partners. *Personal selling* activities carried out by MSME actors are thought to use personal communication approaches, personal techniques and aspects of a more individualized approach, so it is interesting to study how the *personal selling* communication model of MSME actors in Sidoarjo, especially in the Taman District MSME group. MSMEs as the support of the national economy should receive the attention of academics through studies and research, the community as beneficiaries, especially for those who are just starting a business and trying to create added value to their business. There have been many studies on MSME development, marketing strategies, product branding and others. This research is exploratory in nature to see the

communication model formed with the phenomenological method in this study, namely the deepest experience of MSME actors in communicating personal sales of their products.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative approach is used in presenting data with phenomenological methods. This research tries to explore the value in the experience of MSME actors in Taman Sidoarjo Subdistrict, the focus of research on the whole not in part means not only looking for explanations or measures of reality but more than that to see the scientific basis for understanding the behavior of small business actors which researchers will simplify in the form of communication models, therefore the phenomenological method is considered appropriate in this study. In selecting research subjects or informants, the researcher adjusts the instrument, namely interviews and observations, so that the research interview data is rich, the researcher chooses informants according to phenomenological research references, namely; informants must experience firsthand the situation related to the research topic, informants are able to describe the phenomena they have experienced, willing to engage in research activities that require time, willing to be interviewed, giving consent to publish the research results. Then the data that has been reduced will be analyzed phenomenologically according to Creswell (Creswell, 1994) :

- The researcher starts by thoroughly describing the informant's experience
- Develop in detail the results of the interview with no overlap
- The informants' statements were then grouped into meaning units.
- The researcher reflects on her thinking and uses imaginative variations or structural descriptions by considering the frame of reference for how the phenomenon is experienced.
- The researcher then constructs an entire explanation of the meaning and essence of her experience.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal selling is a marketing activity with direct or face-to-face communication. Sellers and buyers or potential customers meet directly so that there is a mutual understanding of the products offered to potential customers. Although currently forms of online marketing or e-commerce have dominated marketing activities, in fact, MSMEs still rely on personal selling activities. In practice, the concept of personal selling does have advantages because it can communicate all product elements integratively and holistically (Helpris Estaswara<sup>1\*</sup>, Eny Yuliastini<sup>2</sup>, 2023). Therefore, the seller's reliability in communicating his product is the key to success in marketing the product. Likewise, what is done by MSMEs in Taman District, Sidoarjo Regency, they still always do personal selling in marketing their products. In practice, personal selling has three specific characters, as follows:

1. Interactive: personal selling activities carried out by MSME actors are interactive, a living relationship between sellers and potential customers. Between sellers and prospective buyers can closely observe each other's reactions. The communication that takes place can be more open and familiar, besides that the response can be responded to quickly.
2. Close relationship; in personal selling activities it is possible to create various relationships, even close relationships can occur. This means that MSME actors as sellers are able to read the interests of potential customers so that customers feel they have something in common with the goal.
3. Good listener; in marketing activities with the concept of personal selling, the response given must be effective so that potential customers feel listened to, and the seller is obliged to listen to all questions about the product from potential customers.

With the characteristics possessed in the concept of personal selling by MSME actors, the process of marketing their products is more flexible because MSME actors as sellers can pay attention to the reactions of potential customers and adjust what communication approaches should be used. In addition, by knowing effective communication techniques, wasted efforts can be avoided and the chances of potential customers buying products will be greater.

### **Communication in Personal Selling**

The initial stage of personal selling is to try to identify potential customers, determine targets so that market segmentation can be formed. From the identification carried out, marketers will be trusted, feel needed and finally agree to provide profitable solutions needed by customers. To meet this expectation, MSME players in Taman Sidoarjo sub-district realize that communication skills must be improved, especially in the aspect of interpersonal communication. Menurut mereka dengan belajar dan mengetahui komunikasi maka kesalahan seperti terlalu responsive terhadap reaksi calon pelanggan bisa dihindari, lalu pemilihan kata dan penyampaian pesan yang santun menjadi servis pemasaran yang disukai calon pelanggan. MSME actors have experienced unpleasant experiences when they are wrong in using messages as expressed below

"I once served a prospective buyer, by telling the price of each product I used the word: this one is expensive, while this one is cheap. It turned out that my prospective customers did not like it, I assumed that my prospective customers were offended, considered unable to buy. But I didn't mean that"

This is an example that in personal selling the use of appropriate communication affects the process of buying and selling transactions that occur. In personal selling communication activities carried out by MSME actors generally use an individual approach. Communication that is carried out face-to-face between one individual and another is able to bridge verbal and non-verbal messages so that each goal is achieved (Abdul Aziz, 2020). The function of the individual approach is also carried out to build networks and product promotion efforts to increase sales volume, as for

interpersonal communication in personal selling activities carried out by MSME actors, namely:

Attention; at this stage MSME actors convince potential customers that they provide something useful, have more value and quality not inferior to the products issued by large companies. They receive potential customers intimately and warmly such as; greeting with a smile, shaking hands, starting conversations with local or regional languages, prioritizing dialogical communication that does not dominate, they use formal calls for the initial stage of interaction but can change informally when the seller and buyer have shown the same interest. According to MSME actors, the most important thing when interacting with potential customers is not to get emotional easily, because in the marketing process the situation is not always as expected, so it is important for MSME actors to be able to control emotions.

1. Show Interest; at this stage, both verbal and non-verbal communication made by potential customers can show an interest in what MSME actors offer, so when they start to be interested, MSME actors usually try to maintain the mood of potential customers. One of the typical ways carried out by MSME actors is to explain or present products well and not demonize competing products from other MSME groups, even they support MSME products from any group.
2. Persuasive; persuasive communication is a communication technique used to influence attitudes and actions by manipulating psychologically so that the target party changes according to what is desired. Persuasive communication also seeks to maintain the belief of potential customers with the benefits offered by marketers (Syamsurizal, 2016). Persuasive communication techniques used by MSME actors are integrative, namely involving communicants in activities that can foster interest in a product being sold, for example allowing potential customers to feel and observe the product. Furthermore, the persuasive communication technique used is by involving emotions, for example telling about economic conditions, telling about hard work in producing products, and it turns out that this way is effective in influencing the emotions of potential customers so that the desire to buy products arises..

Basically, MSME actors are aware that the sales method with personal selling cannot be the only way to market their products, but with the limitations they have faced to date, personal selling is the main way they rely on. After making transactions in personal selling activities, MSME actors always give customers confidence that their decision to buy MSME products is very correct.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that MSME actors carry out persuasive communication in personal selling activities, the persuasive communication techniques they use include giving full attention to potential customers, using verbal and non-verbal language, showing the same interest as customers shown by assertive communication and positive gestures, then communication with integrative persuasive techniques and techniques involving emotions. The communication they use is able to increase sales of their products and build networks on a small scale according to the market segmentation they are targeting.

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