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# Marketing Communication Strategies for Consumable Products in Emerging Markets: Insights from Indonesia

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to explore marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets, with insights drawn from Indonesia's rapidly evolving digital commerce environment. As competition intensifies in terms of price, product quality, and promotional activities, businesses face growing challenges in developing effective marketing communication approaches that enhance brand positioning and customer engagement. This research seeks to identify key elements and best practices of marketing communication strategies suitable for consumable product sectors operating in highly competitive online marketplaces.

**Methodology:** A qualitative approach was employed, guided by Kotler and Keller's Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework and P.R. Smith's SOSTAC model. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observation of business actors engaged in online commerce in Indonesia, with particular reference to the implementation of marketing strategies on leading e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia. The study emphasizes the formulation, coordination, and execution of digital marketing communication strategies in a dynamic online retail environment.

**Findings:** The results reveal that successful marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets involve a combination of advertising, publicity, and interactive digital engagement. Consistent brand messaging across online channels, rapid customer response, and the use of promotional events were identified as crucial factors in strengthening consumer trust and loyalty. The effective integration of IMC components within e-commerce ecosystems supports sustained competitiveness and brand differentiation.

**Originality/Novelty:** This study offers new insights into how integrated marketing communication frameworks can be adapted for consumable product marketing in emerging markets. It highlights the strategic role of e-commerce platforms as adaptive media for digital marketing communication and brand engagement in Indonesia's dynamic marketplace.

**Keywords:** strategies, marketing communication, digital marketing.

**Type of paper:** Research Paper



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## 1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the global business landscape, particularly in emerging markets where internet penetration and smartphone adoption continue to rise. In this evolving environment, marketing communication plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, influencing purchasing decisions, and

strengthening brand engagement. As traditional media gradually lose dominance, digital platforms such as e-commerce, social media, and search engines have become central to how businesses communicate value and reach their target audiences (Brahma & Dutta, 2020; Ong & Toh, 2023; Semenda et al., 2024). Marketing communication strategies refer to the systematic use of various tools—advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and digital engagement—to build a consistent brand message and achieve organizational objectives (Özturan et al., 2024; Wisnujati, Sangadji, et al., 2024). The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) emphasizes the need for synergy among these tools to deliver unified messages across multiple channels (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010, 2015; Rehman et al., 2022; Valos et al., 2016). In emerging markets such as Indonesia, where consumer behavior is rapidly shifting toward digital consumption, IMC serves as a framework for aligning online and offline communication strategies to enhance market performance.

Indonesia represents one of the most dynamic emerging economies in Southeast Asia, supported by a rapidly expanding e-commerce sector with an estimated 65.65 million users in 2024 and a consistently growing user base projected to add more than 33 million additional users by 2029 (Statista, 2025). Platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Lazada have redefined how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. According to the iPrice Group (2022), Tokopedia ranked as the most-visited e-commerce platform in Indonesia, with more than 149 million monthly visitors. This phenomenon illustrates the changing nature of consumption, where convenience, accessibility, and digital trust influence purchasing behavior. In the context of consumable products—such as food, beverages, and household goods—the competition is especially intense. These products are characterized by frequent purchase cycles, low brand loyalty, and high price sensitivity. Therefore, effective marketing communication strategies must not only raise awareness but also build consumer trust and encourage repeat purchases. In emerging markets, where infrastructure and digital literacy vary widely, businesses must adapt their strategies to local contexts and cultural nuances (Lestari et al., 2024; Özturan et al., 2024; Wisnujati, Kamal, et al., 2024).

Recent studies emphasize that digital marketing communication has become a key determinant of success in emerging markets. Arvinta (2022) found that most Indonesian consumers now conduct e-commerce transactions via smartphones, indicating a significant shift toward mobile-first marketing approaches, while Kurniawati & Yusuf (2019) demonstrated that integrated marketing activities—combining advertising, sales promotion, and public relations—can effectively enhance brand image and customer loyalty. These findings underscore the growing importance of cohesive, data-driven communication strategies in achieving competitive advantage. Building upon this foundation, the present study explores marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets, with particular attention to insights drawn from the Indonesian digital marketplace. It examines how local businesses formulate and implement communication strategies across digital platforms, especially e-commerce sites such as Tokopedia, to strengthen consumer engagement and sales performance. By analyzing how marketing communication operates within a rapidly digitizing environment, this research provides

empirical insights into the evolving dynamics of marketing communication for consumable goods in Indonesia, discusses the strategic use of integrated communication tools within digital ecosystems, identifies challenges faced by firms in emerging markets, and highlights adaptive strategies that enhance market competitiveness. Ultimately, the study seeks to enrich the academic discourse on how marketing communication strategies can drive sustainable growth and competitiveness in the digital economy.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)**

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a strategic concept in marketing communication planning that emphasizes the importance of integrating various communication tools and channels to deliver consistent messages to target audiences. According to Kotler (2012), IMC is not merely the combination of several promotional elements, but rather a comprehensive planning process that evaluates the strategic roles of different communication disciplines—such as advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, and public relations—so that all messages delivered to consumers produce maximum communication impact. Consistency is central to IMC, because inconsistent messages may cause confusion among consumers and weaken brand image. IMC is essentially defined as a process of managing customer relationships aimed at creating and enhancing brand value. This process is cross-functional, involving coordination among various departments within an organization to establish mutually beneficial relationships with customers and stakeholders. Kotler *et al* (2002) emphasize that IMC seeks to control and guide all forms of messages received by consumers in a planned manner, thereby fostering meaningful two-way communication. Similarly, Kotler & Armstrong (2018) describe IMC as an effort through which a company integrates and coordinates multiple communication channels to deliver clear, consistent, and compelling messages about the organization and its products.

Broadly, IMC can be understood both as a concept and as a process. As a concept, IMC focuses on creating customer value and building brand equity by developing positive perceptions that are embedded in the minds of consumers. This perception may involve functional benefits, emotional connections, or symbolic meanings attached to the brand. As a process, IMC concentrates on managing long-term customer relationships through sustained, consistent, and targeted communication (Moriarty & Schultz, 2012; Purboyo *et al.*, 2021; Sangadji, 2021). Thus, IMC is not only concerned with short-term promotional efforts, but also with long-term strategies aimed at fostering customer loyalty. IMC integrates various marketing communication functions such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, digital marketing, and content marketing. The goal of this integration is to strengthen consumers' perceptions and relationships with the brand, ensuring that brand messages are coherent and reinforce one another across different touchpoints. For example, when a company wishes to position its product as a premium offering, the advertising message, packaging design, communication tone, customer service approach, and promotional campaigns must all consistently convey exclusivity, elegance, and superior quality. If one element communicates a different impression, the brand's

intended positioning can become distorted, which may reduce its credibility and perceived value.

Effective implementation of IMC results in strong message synergy, where each communication activity supports and enhances the others. This synergy helps consumers build a clear understanding of the brand and the value it offers. Once consumers have formed favorable perceptions and emotional attachment to a brand, they are more likely to exhibit brand preference and repeat purchase behavior. Such outcomes contribute to the development of customer loyalty, which plays a crucial role in increasing sales and ensuring long-term profitability. Therefore, IMC holds a significant role in achieving marketing objectives. It does not only aim to generate brand awareness but also to shape attitudes, influence consumer behavior, and guide purchase decisions. By ensuring that every interaction between the consumer and the brand reflects a coherent identity, message, and value proposition, IMC helps establish strong and enduring brand relationships. In this way, IMC serves as an essential approach for organizations seeking sustainable competitive advantage in increasingly competitive and dynamic market environments.

### **The SOSTAC Planning Framework**

Formulating an effective marketing communication strategy requires a systematic, structured, and logically coherent planning approach. One widely used model in this context is the SOSTAC Planning Framework, developed by Smith & Chaffey (2008). SOSTAC is valued for its simplicity, flexibility, and comprehensiveness, making it applicable across various strategic domains, including corporate planning, marketing strategy, digital marketing management, and communication planning. Through this framework, organizations are able to direct communication efforts more efficiently while ensuring alignment with broader organizational goals. The term SOSTAC is an acronym for Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action, and Control. Each component forms an interconnected sequence that guides the planning process from initial assessment to monitoring and evaluation. This framework can be considered an elaboration of the traditional SWOT analysis, but with stronger emphasis on operationalization and performance measurement. In other words, SOSTAC is not merely diagnostic but also action-oriented and adaptable to dynamic market conditions.

The first stage, Situation Analysis, involves gaining a thorough understanding of the market environment, customer behavior, and the organization's competitive position. This stage requires systematic data collection and interpretation, including internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. Insights from industry trends, technological changes, consumer preferences, and competitor strategies are critical inputs. Chaffey and Smith emphasize that this stage may account for up to half of the total planning effort, as accurate and comprehensive situational understanding serves as the foundation for the decisions that follow. Once the situation is clearly understood, the next step is defining Objectives. Objectives should be formulated in alignment with the organization's strategic direction and follow SMART criteria—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. These objectives may involve increasing market share, enhancing brand awareness, improving digital engagement, boosting sales, or

achieving stronger customer loyalty. Kotler & Keller (2016) notes that well-defined objectives provide clarity and focus, ensuring that communication activities are targeted and measurable.

The third stage is Strategy, which outlines the general approach to achieving the stated objectives. This includes determining the target audience, formulating the value proposition, and crafting the core message to be communicated. Strategic considerations involve segmenting the market, selecting target segments, and positioning the brand in ways that reflect consumer needs and competitive differentiation. A sound strategy ensures that communication efforts are relevant and persuasive. Following strategy development, Tactics specify the concrete marketing communication tools and media channels to be used. This includes decisions on advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, social media communication, influencer collaborations, and other promotional instruments. Tactics translate strategic intent into actionable communication activities that reach the intended audiences in appropriate contexts.

The fifth stage, Action, involves translating tactics into detailed implementation plans. This stage includes scheduling activities, assigning responsibilities, mobilizing teams, and allocating necessary resources. An action plan ensures that implementation proceeds in an organized and timely manner, minimizing ambiguity and execution barriers. Finally, the Control stage focuses on monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting communication performance. According to Grace & O'cass (2005), evaluation should not only assess message reach or frequency but also examine changes in consumer attitudes, brand perception, and behavioral responses. Continuous feedback enables organizations to refine communication efforts in real time rather than waiting until the end of a campaign or fiscal cycle. In essence, integrating Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) principles within the SOSTAC framework ensures that communication activities are coherent, measurable, and adaptable. This approach is particularly relevant in highly competitive and dynamic markets such as Indonesia, where organizations must develop communication strategies capable of creating sustained value, maintaining message consistency, and responding effectively to evolving market demands.

### **3. Methods**

This study employs a constructivist qualitative research design to explore and interpret marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets, using Indonesia as a contextual setting. The constructivist paradigm is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to understand social realities as dynamic constructs shaped by interactions, perceptions, and experiences of business actors within the evolving digital economy. Through this perspective, marketing communication is not seen merely as a set of techniques but as an adaptive process influenced by cultural, technological, and behavioral changes among consumers in developing markets. A qualitative exploratory approach was applied to gain an in-depth understanding of how businesses design and implement communication strategies to promote consumable products, particularly in the post-pandemic era when digital commerce has expanded rapidly. This method allows the researcher to capture the meanings, motivations, and interpretations underlying marketing

practices rather than relying solely on quantitative indicators. The research was conducted within the Indonesian e-commerce ecosystem, which provides a rich environment for studying marketing communication due to its growing number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and increasing consumer engagement in online shopping.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, online observations, and document reviews. Interviews were conducted through digital communication platforms such as chat applications and video calls to allow flexibility and access to participants located in different regions. Informants included business owners, marketing administrators, digital content managers, and customers who actively engage in online marketplaces. Their insights provided a multifaceted understanding of marketing communication strategies from both managerial and consumer perspectives. Online observations were carried out by monitoring promotional content, brand interactions, and customer responses on popular e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia and Shopee. Additionally, secondary data were obtained from company websites, social media accounts, and digital promotional materials to supplement and verify the primary findings. Purposive sampling was used to identify information-rich cases that represent successful examples of marketing communication practices in emerging markets. Selection criteria included the enterprise's experience in online retail for at least three years, consistent customer engagement performance, and the implementation of diverse digital communication strategies across multiple channels. This sampling technique was considered suitable because it allows the inclusion of participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience in digital marketing for consumable products.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to marketing communication strategies. The analysis involved familiarization with the data through transcription and coding, followed by grouping the codes into broader thematic categories such as message framing, channel selection, customer engagement, and brand trust development. These themes were then interpreted to reveal how marketing communication strategies are constructed, adapted, and sustained in Indonesia's emerging market context. To ensure validity and reliability, this study applied triangulation techniques that cross-checked information obtained from different data sources and participant groups. Triangulation was achieved by comparing interview responses among various informants, verifying qualitative insights with observed promotional activities and customer feedback, and consulting external perspectives from digital marketing practitioners and academic observers. This methodological rigor enhances the credibility of the findings and supports the development of a contextualized understanding of how marketing communication strategies for consumable products operate effectively within the socio-economic realities of emerging markets such as Indonesia.

#### **4. Result and Discussion**

The results of this study reveal that marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets are increasingly characterized by digital integration, adaptive communication, and consumer-centric engagement. In the context of Indonesia, as a

rapidly developing economy with high digital adoption, companies selling consumable goods have transformed their marketing practices from traditional, offline promotion toward data-driven and interactive digital communication. This transformation aligns with the principles of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which emphasize the coordination of multiple communication tools—advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, interactive media, and public relations—into a unified and consistent brand message (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Empirical findings indicate that Indonesian businesses operating in the consumable goods sector have been compelled to restructure their marketing strategies in response to behavioral shifts among consumers who increasingly rely on e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and TikTok Shop. Digitalization has enabled these firms to directly reach their target audiences through automated advertising systems, social media engagement, and interactive communication. The implementation of IMC in this context allows companies to maintain coherence across digital touchpoints, ensuring that advertising messages, promotional campaigns, and customer service interactions collectively reinforce the brand's value proposition.

A detailed examination of the marketing communication strategies employed by consumable product firms demonstrates a clear pattern of alignment with the SOSTAC model—comprising Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action, and Control. The situation analysis underscores a fundamental transformation in market behavior, where increased smartphone usage, online payment systems, and logistics innovation have created a conducive environment for digital commerce. Companies that previously depended on offline distributors now leverage e-commerce as both a sales and communication platform, thereby gaining real-time insights into consumer preferences.

The main objective of communication strategies among these firms is to build awareness and trust while expanding their consumer base. Consumable product providers seek not only to increase visibility but also to establish long-term relationships with customers through transparent information, competitive pricing, and quick response mechanisms. These goals reflect the IMC principle of maintaining a consistent and customer-oriented communication approach. Strategically, firms adopt multi-channel integration, combining e-commerce advertising, social media storytelling, influencer collaboration, and direct digital engagement to strengthen their positioning. This integration supports the view of Belch & Belch (2018), who argue that IMC enables companies to achieve synergy between different promotional tools to reinforce a unified message in the consumer's mind. The tactical dimension of marketing communication in Indonesia's emerging market setting involves the practical application of digital tools and creative content management. Companies employ high-quality visual imagery, persuasive copywriting, and keyword optimization to enhance product discoverability. On platforms like Tokopedia, for example, automated advertising (TopAds) and promotional features are used to ensure that products appear prominently in search results, thereby increasing visibility. In addition, quick and personalized responses through chat features have become a determinant of consumer trust and purchase decisions. These practices affirm Morgan & Hunt (1994) Relationship Marketing Theory, which posits that trust and commitment are essential components in maintaining long-term consumer relationships.

The findings also highlight that the implementation of action-oriented communication strategies relies heavily on internal coordination and continuous performance evaluation. Companies that regularly conduct digital analytics reviews and team discussions are better positioned to adapt to shifting market dynamics. The use of platform-based analytical tools such as Google Ads Metrics, Tokopedia Insight, and Shopee Analytics provides marketers with accurate feedback on customer engagement, conversion rates, and advertising effectiveness. The control stage of the SOSTAC framework thus becomes essential, as it allows firms to assess whether communication activities are consistent with strategic goals and to make timely adjustments when necessary. The following table summarizes how the IMC and SOSTAC elements intersect in shaping marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets.

Table 1. Integration of IMC and SOSTAC in Marketing Communication Strategies for Consumable Products

SOSTAC Component	Marketing Communication Element (IMC Integration)	Key Insights from Indonesian Context
Situation	Public relations, digital observation	High smartphone penetration and e-commerce adoption have shifted consumer habits from offline to online purchasing.
Objectives	Advertising and brand awareness	Firms aim to build brand recognition and consumer trust through consistent and informative digital messaging.
Strategy	Integrated channel management	Businesses combine e-commerce, social media, and direct marketing to maintain brand coherence and maximize exposure.
Tactics	Promotional campaigns and interactive content	Use of automated ads, influencer collaboration, and product visuals enhances engagement and drives sales.
Action	Internal communication and execution	Teams coordinate advertising schedules and content releases while monitoring real-time feedback.
Control	Analytics and consumer feedback	Data-driven monitoring ensures performance alignment and continuous optimization of strategies.



The data presented in Table 1 illustrate that successful marketing communication strategies in emerging markets are not confined to advertising alone but depend on the integration of multiple communication instruments within a structured strategic framework. This finding supports Pike (2012) assertion that effective IMC requires harmonization between corporate objectives, marketing tools, and environmental conditions. These results highlights that digital marketing has become the backbone of communication for consumable products in emerging markets. Companies utilize online platforms not only to sell products but also to educate and engage consumers. The two-way interactivity of digital platforms facilitates relationship building, enabling businesses to gather insights, respond to feedback, and co-create value with consumers. This interactivity represents a significant departure from the one-directional nature of traditional advertising and aligns with the interactive marketing component of IMC. Moreover, advertising in emerging markets such as Indonesia serves as both an informational and persuasive tool. Research by Hapsari (2020) suggests that the saturation of online advertisements requires firms to adopt more creative and value-driven communication approaches. Therefore, instead of relying solely on repetitive exposure, effective campaigns now emphasize relevance, personalization, and authenticity. This approach helps overcome “ad fatigue” and fosters a deeper emotional connection between consumers and brands.

Another important finding concerns the role of trust and credibility. Consumer decisions in digital environments are heavily influenced by perceived reliability of information and responsiveness of sellers. Companies that maintain fast communication response times, display transparent product reviews, and ensure consistent quality are more likely to build customer loyalty. This is consistent with Setyawan (2024) observation that responsiveness and authenticity in digital communication significantly affect repurchase and recommendation intentions. Strategically, the Indonesian experience underscores the importance of combining localization with digitalization. While global digital tools provide universal reach, local adaptation—such as using culturally resonant messages, vernacular language, and region-specific promotions—enhances consumer relatability and acceptance. Emerging market consumers are not merely price-sensitive but also value emotional trust, convenience, and authenticity in brand interactions. Thus, marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets are undergoing a structural transformation driven by digital technology, changing consumer expectations, and competitive dynamics. The integration of IMC principles within the SOSTAC framework provides a comprehensive model for firms seeking to optimize communication effectiveness. The Indonesian context illustrates how a well-coordinated, data-driven, and consumer-centered approach can enhance not only sales performance but also long-term brand equity. Ultimately, success in emerging markets depends on the ability of companies to balance persuasive promotion with meaningful engagement, transforming marketing communication from mere selling into an ongoing dialogue of trust, value, and experience.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that marketing communication strategies for consumable products in emerging markets are undergoing significant structural transformation driven by digitalization, evolving consumer behavior, and increasing market competition. In the Indonesian context, companies have shifted from predominantly offline and transactional promotional practices toward integrated, data-driven, and interactive digital communication models. The findings confirm that the implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) principles, when aligned with the SOSTAC planning framework, allows firms to maintain message coherence, strengthen brand presence, and foster sustained consumer engagement across multiple platforms. The integration of e-commerce advertising, social media storytelling, influencer collaboration, and personalized communication has proven effective in enhancing both consumer trust and purchase decision-making. Moreover, the study highlights that relationship-building elements—such as responsiveness, transparency, and authenticity—are critical in digital environments where consumers demand not only information but meaningful interaction.

The Indonesian experience further illustrates that successful communication strategies require balancing global technological capability with local cultural sensitivity. By tailoring messages to local context while leveraging advanced digital tools, companies can generate stronger emotional resonance and greater consumer loyalty. Overall, the results emphasize that firms operating in emerging markets must adopt communication strategies that are adaptive, analytically informed, and consumer-centric. The integration of IMC within the SOSTAC framework provides a strategic blueprint for achieving communication effectiveness, competitive differentiation, and long-term brand equity in rapidly evolving digital marketplaces.

Despite its contributions, this study presents several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research focuses primarily on consumable product firms operating within the Indonesian emerging market context; therefore, the generalizability of findings may be limited when applied to other product categories or markets with different levels of digital maturity. Comparative research across multiple emerging economies is recommended to further validate the applicability of the integrated IMC–SOSTAC model. Second, the study is based largely on conceptual analysis and secondary data observations. Future research should incorporate empirical designs—such as surveys, experiments, or structural equation modeling—to quantitatively test the relationships between IMC practices, digital engagement, consumer trust, and purchase outcomes.

Third, the dynamic nature of digital platforms means that communication strategies must evolve continuously. This study captures trends at a specific point in time, and shifts in technology—such as AI-based personalization, influencer commerce, or immersive shopping experiences—may significantly reshape communication strategies in the near future. Longitudinal studies are therefore necessary to assess how communication effectiveness changes over time. Lastly, future research may explore consumer perspectives more deeply, particularly regarding how cultural values, lifestyle differences, and digital literacy levels influence responses to integrated marketing communication strategies in emerging markets.

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