

Sustainable Marketing Strategy through Social Media as a Supporting Force for Food Security in Chili and Tomato Seed Products

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.61796/jaide.v2i1.1484>



Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: Oktober 25, 2024
Final Revised: November 11, 2024
Accepted: December 18, 2024
Published: January 31, 2025

Keywords:

Social media
Delivery services
Digital marketing
Horticultural seeds
Food security

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates the marketing strategies of chili and tomato seedlings through social media and analyzes the role of delivery services in enhancing marketing success and contributing to local food security. **Method:** A descriptive qualitative approach was applied, utilizing in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation with seedling farmers in Bojonegoro Regency. **Results:** The research reveals that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most effective platforms for promoting seedlings due to their accessibility and strong community engagement. Marketing strategies such as visual content sharing, customer testimonials, and educational posts were found to significantly increase consumer trust and market reach. The study also emphasizes that efficient, secure, and affordable delivery services are crucial for maintaining the quality and viability of horticultural seedlings during distribution. **Novelty:** This research underscores the synergistic relationship between digital marketing and logistics as a sustainable model for strengthening farmers' economic resilience and ensuring the availability of high-quality seedlings, thereby reinforcing regional food security.

INTRODUCTION

Chili peppers and tomatoes are strategic food commodities that play a vital role in the daily lives of Indonesians [1]. Not only are they key ingredients in various culinary dishes, but they also have a significant impact on food price stability. Data from various reports show that fluctuations in chili and tomato prices are often one of the triggers of national inflation [2]. When chili prices spike, for example, this is immediately felt by the wider community, prompting the government to pay special attention to the availability and distribution of these two commodities. As demand increases, the number of chili and tomato farmers continues to grow, including farmers who specialize in producing high-quality seeds.

However, high demand does not always correlate with ease of marketing. Chili and tomato seed farmers often face various challenges, ranging from limited market access, low modern marketing literacy, to competition with large-scale seed producers [3]. In today's digital age, the success of marketing a product depends not only on quality, but also on the ability to communicate the value of the product to potential buyers. Traditional marketing strategies that rely on direct sales or conventional networks are beginning to be abandoned because they are considered ineffective in reaching a wider market [4].

On the other hand, developments in information technology have opened up new opportunities through the use of social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp Business, and TikTok have proven effective in promoting agricultural products, building distribution networks, and expanding market reach. Social media is not only a means of promotion, but also a two-way communication tool that can build trust between producers and consumers. Thus, social media-based marketing strategies are a potential solution for chili and tomato seed farmers to increase competitiveness and expand their markets [5].

Given the important role of chili and tomato seeds in the national food supply chain, as well as the challenges faced by farmers in marketing their products [6], this research is relevant. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how marketing strategies, particularly through social media, can support the sustainability of chili and tomato seed farmers' businesses and contribute to national food stability. In addition, the results of this study are expected to serve as a practical reference for farmers and stakeholders in formulating more adaptive marketing strategies in the digital era. The findings of this study can also provide a basis for the development of policies that support the strengthening of local farmers' marketing capacity in a sustainable manner.

Currently, agricultural product marketing strategies are increasingly found on various social media platforms. Social media is chosen because it is easily accessible to the public, more practical, and relatively inexpensive compared to conventional marketing methods. However, the use of social media in marketing varies, as consumers tend to choose platforms that suit their preferences, effectiveness, and level of response [7]. Of the various social media platforms used, a natural selection process occurs, whereby only certain platforms prove to be more effective in attracting buyers. In the context of marketing chili and tomato seeds, for example, many farmers use Facebook as their main medium for promoting their products and conducting transactions with consumers [8].

In fact, there are many types of social media and digital marketing platforms that can be used for product promotion. However, in practice, not all social media platforms are able to generate an optimal response from buyers. This is because each platform has different audience characteristics, algorithms, and interaction patterns. In addition, each product has a consumer segment with specific preferences, so marketing strategies need to be tailored to the behavior and habits of the target market. Thus, choosing the right social media must consider the suitability between product characteristics, consumer profiles, and the effectiveness of the platform in building interactions that lead to transactions [9].

In addition to choosing the right social media, the success of marketing in having a real impact on product sales also depends heavily on the support of delivery services. When manufacturers use social media to market their products, consumers automatically expect that the products they purchase will be delivered quickly, safely, and on time to their destination [10]. Thus, social media as a promotional channel and delivery services as a means of distribution are two complementary elements in a digital marketing

strategy. The connection between the two forms a complete service chain, from promotion and transactions to product distribution to consumers. However, the aspect of integration between digital marketing and delivery services is often overlooked by small-scale manufacturers, thereby hindering the effectiveness of their marketing strategies.

This study shows that social media marketing strategies cannot be discussed separately from delivery services. These two elements must be viewed as a single entity that supports each other. Product prices, for example, will become less competitive if delivery costs are too high, thereby reducing consumer interest in purchasing. Similarly, limited or inaccessible delivery services will hinder product distribution to consumers [11]. Therefore, the role of delivery services is an important factor in developing a sustainable marketing strategy through social media, especially for chili and tomato seeds, which have specific characteristics in terms of handling and delivery. A common phenomenon is that transactions can be hampered or even canceled if shipping costs are unaffordable or shipping services cannot guarantee the speed and safety of products until they reach consumers.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of utilizing social media in marketing agricultural products, particularly in relation to vegetable seeds. One of the most recent studies [12] examined how young farmers use Instagram and WhatsApp to market horticultural products, including tomato and chili seeds, and build environmentally friendly branding. This study shows that the use of attractive visual content on Instagram can increase buyer interest, while WhatsApp is more effective for direct communication and transactions. The results of this study confirm that social media not only serves as a means of promotion, but also as a strategic tool for building long-term relationships with consumers and strengthening loyalty to the agricultural products offered.

Next, study [13] mentions that sales of tomato and chili seeds have increased significantly through e-commerce platforms and social media, as well as the importance of supply sustainability. This study highlights how the integration of digital promotion and ease of online transactions can expand the market reach of seed farmers more efficiently. However, the study also emphasizes the importance of supply sustainability and product quality for digital marketing strategies to run optimally. Without a guarantee of consistent seed availability, the effectiveness of social media as a marketing channel will be reduced because consumer trust can easily decline when demand cannot be met on a sustainable basis.

Although a number of previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of social media in marketing agricultural products, the focus of the study still tends to be limited to aspects of digital promotion and communication patterns between sellers and buyers. Study [12], for example, highlights how attractive visual content on Instagram can increase buyer interest, while WhatsApp is effective as a medium for direct transactions. Similarly, study [13] shows that e-commerce platforms and social media can expand market reach, but this success is highly influenced by the availability of a sustainable

supply. However, these two studies have not fully examined other equally important supporting factors, such as the affordability of distribution costs, the speed of delivery services, and their impact on consumer trust.

In addition, most studies are still general in nature and do not specifically discuss horticultural products such as chili and tomato seeds, which have different characteristics compared to direct consumption agricultural products. Seeds require special handling, more careful delivery, and quality assurance to ensure they are still suitable for planting when they reach consumers. Therefore, there is a gap in research to examine marketing strategies through social media integrated with delivery services as a single entity that supports the sustainability of seed product marketing. Research that links the aspects of platform selection, horticultural seed product characteristics, and effective distribution systems will provide a more complete understanding and offer practical solutions for seed farmers in increasing competitiveness in the digital era.

In social media marketing strategies, there is an important phenomenon that strategically influences marketing success, namely the role of delivery services. However, this aspect is often overlooked or considered insignificant in designing digital marketing strategies [14]. In practice, the majority of consumers want the products they purchase to be delivered directly to their destination, even with a cash on delivery (COD) system. Thus, the availability of easily accessible delivery services, fast delivery times, and affordable shipping costs are important elements in supporting the smooth running of social media marketing.

This is even more crucial for chili and tomato seeds, which are sensitive and prone to damage or death during shipping. Good seed quality and competitive product prices will not be enough to attract consumers if producers are unable to provide fast, safe, and economical shipping services. Without adequate distribution support, sales transactions will be difficult to realize even if promotions have been carried out optimally [5]. Therefore, the integration of digital marketing strategies and delivery services is a key factor in the success of marketing horticultural seed products through social media [15].

This research is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 8, namely Decent Work and Economic Growth [16]. Optimizing the use of social media as a marketing tool, combined with efficient delivery services, can open up wider market access for farmers and local agricultural businesses. With this expansion of market reach, opportunities for increased sales volume and income become greater, thereby ensuring business sustainability. In addition, digital marketing integrated with reliable logistics distribution can minimize the risk of losses due to product damage, increase consumer confidence, and strengthen the competitiveness of local products amid increasingly fierce market competition [17].

In addition, strengthening technology-based marketing strategies also drives local economic growth by empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the agricultural sector. With more equitable market access, agricultural businesses are not only able to survive, but also thrive, creating new jobs and improving the welfare of rural communities. Therefore, the integration of social media and delivery services in the

marketing of chili and tomato seeds not only benefits individual producers but also has broader socioeconomic impacts, aligning with the SDGs' vision for inclusive, sustainable, and equitable economic growth.

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how chili and tomato seed marketing strategies are carried out through social media and how the role of delivery services affects the success of transactions. Using a qualitative approach, this study seeks to explore the experiences, strategies, and challenges faced by farmers and seedling businesses in marketing their products in the digital era. In addition, this study aims to identify the extent to which the integration of social media with delivery services can increase market access, expand distribution networks, and support the sustainability of small businesses in the agricultural sector. The findings of this study are expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions to business actors, policy makers, and other parties interested in developing effective and sustainable digital marketing, while also being relevant to the achievement of SDG 8 on inclusive economic growth.

Social Media Marketing

Social media is a digital platform that allows users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and various forms of content such as text, images, videos, and sound interactively. Social media is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” [18]. This definition confirms that social media was born from the development of Web 2.0 technology, which emphasizes collaboration, interactivity, and the active role of users as both creators and consumers of content (prosumers). Thus, social media is not only a one-way communication channel, but also a digital ecosystem that enables massive, real-time, two-way interaction [19].

The development of social media has changed the way people communicate, access information, and even conduct economic activities. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and YouTube are now used not only for social purposes, but also as strategic tools for marketing products and services. The open, easily accessible, and wide-reaching nature of social media makes it an effective tool for building relationships with consumers, strengthening brand image, and increasing product visibility. In the context of agriculture, social media even allows producers to interact directly with consumers without intermediaries, thereby shortening the distribution chain and expanding the market more efficiently.

As the digital era evolves, social media has become an important instrument in agricultural product marketing strategies [20]. In the context of agricultural marketing, social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook have proven to be effective in bringing farmers closer to end consumers. The use of these platforms can improve operational efficiency, expand market reach, and drive increased sales of horticultural products. This phenomenon makes it clear that social media is not only a communication channel, but also a strategic tool in strengthening product distribution and building market trust.

In the context of marketing local products, strategies such as storytelling, content personalization, and direct interaction with consumers are key to increasing buyer loyalty. On the other hand, social media can also be used as a means to monitor consumer opinions and trends in real time, enabling agribusinesses to respond to market needs more quickly. A data-driven approach to social media further strengthens its function as a dynamic and accessible source of market intelligence.

Social media has many benefits in agricultural marketing: expanding market access, strengthening branding, increasing transaction efficiency, and building consumer trust. However, significant challenges remain, such as low digital literacy, limited systematic content strategies, and barriers to technology adoption by some farmers. For chili and tomato seed products that demand delivery quality and supply chain reliability, the success of marketing strategies also depends on the integration of social media with adequate logistical support. There have not been many studies that specifically link these two aspects, so there is still room for further research to understand digital marketing strategies that are integrated with fast, safe, and affordable distribution services.

Agricultural Product Delivery and Digital Marketing Services

In the era of digital marketing, the success of a transaction is not only determined by attractive promotions, but also by the ability of producers to ensure that products reach consumers in good condition, on time, and at an affordable cost [22]. This is where the role of delivery services becomes crucial. In the context of the agricultural supply chain, logistics serves as a link between producers and consumers, as well as a determinant of customer satisfaction. Agricultural products, especially horticultural seeds such as chili peppers and tomatoes, are sensitive and have a limited shelf life. Therefore, speed, accuracy, and security of delivery are important factors that determine the success of digital marketing of these products.

The concept of logistics in agricultural marketing is not only related to the transportation process, but also includes distribution flow management, packaging, product handling, and after-sales service. In social media-based marketing, transactions are often carried out directly between producers and consumers without intermediaries [5]. This shortens the distribution chain, but at the same time requires producers to have a reliable delivery system. If deliveries are delayed or products are damaged during transit, consumer trust will decline and potentially hinder business continuity. This is in line with the view that logistics is one of the key elements in creating added value for consumers, especially in the marketing of agricultural products that are highly dependent on the physical quality of the product.

Research on the distribution of horticultural products shows that logistics costs often influence the final selling price of products [23]. If shipping costs are too high, the price of the product will be less competitive, thereby reducing consumer interest in purchasing it. Conversely, if producers are able to provide fast and inexpensive delivery services, consumer satisfaction and loyalty will increase. In the marketing of chili and tomato seeds, shipping costs not only affect consumer purchasing power, but also

determine the success of cultivation, as the seeds must arrive fresh, healthy, and ready to plant.

In addition to cost, the speed and security of delivery are also important factors. In some cases, delays in seed delivery have resulted in damage or death of plants before they reach consumers [24]. This shows that the success of digital marketing must be viewed holistically, where social media is only the starting point for promotion and transactions, while delivery services are the ultimate determinant of customer satisfaction. The combination of the two forms a complete digital marketing strategy.

In addition, the integration of delivery services with digital platforms is increasingly being carried out through collaboration with technology-based logistics providers. For example, several e-commerce platforms have provided fast delivery service options with real-time tracking features, flexible payment systems, and guarantees of returns if the product is damaged. However, most small-scale farmers do not yet have optimal access to these services due to limitations in cost, infrastructure, and digital literacy. This poses a unique challenge in utilizing social media as a truly effective marketing tool [25].

Delivery services are an integral part of the digital marketing strategy for agricultural products. The success of marketing chili and tomato seeds through social media will not be optimal without the support of a fast, safe, and affordable distribution system. The integration of social media as a promotional tool and delivery services as a distribution channel is key to the success of online transactions, as well as determining the sustainability of farmers and small businesses in the agricultural sector. However, literature specifically examining the relationship between social media strategies and agricultural product delivery systems is still limited, so further research is needed to understand the integration of the two more comprehensively.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the marketing strategies for chili and tomato seeds through social media and the role of delivery services in supporting the success of these marketing strategies [26]. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore the experiences, views, and actual practices of business actors in a contextual manner without manipulating variables. The focus of the research is to describe the marketing practices of chili and tomato seeds through social media, identify the most effective platforms used, and analyze the role of delivery services in supporting the success of transactions. This research is exploratory in nature because it seeks to explain phenomena that have not been widely discussed in previous literature, particularly regarding the integration of social media and agricultural logistics.

As a descriptive qualitative study, this research emphasizes the collection of empirical data directly from farmers, consumers, and delivery service providers. The researchers seek to understand the meaning and context behind the use of social media and delivery services in seed marketing, rather than simply measuring their quantitative

impact. Thus, this research is not oriented towards numbers, but rather towards describing the processes, trends, and obstacles faced by business actors in the field. This approach is considered relevant because it can explore actual phenomena naturally, provide in-depth understanding, and reveal the complex realities of agricultural product marketing in the digital age.

The respondents in this study were chili and tomato seed producers or farmers who actively marketed their products through social media, particularly Facebook, and relied on delivery services as part of their distribution strategy. The research population includes small to medium-scale producers who have direct experience using social media for at least the past six months, have used or are currently using delivery services in the seed sales process, are willing to provide information related to marketing and distribution practices, and reside in the research area, namely Bojonegoro Regency. The sampling technique was purposive, which is the selection of informants who are considered to have relevant and in-depth information in accordance with the research needs. The number of informants was not determined rigidly, but was adjusted according to the principle of data saturation, which is when the information obtained begins to repeat itself and no new findings emerge. In the context of this study, it is estimated that there are five to ten main informants consisting of farmers or producers of chili and tomato seeds, as well as supporting informants such as consumers, delivery service providers, or managers of agricultural buying and selling communities on social media.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests. Credibility was obtained through triangulation of sources, methods, and time, for example by combining in-depth interviews, documentation of marketing activities on social media, and direct observation in the field. Transferability is ensured by providing clear contextual descriptions so that the findings can be understood and applied in similar situations. Meanwhile, reliability is not defined as the uniformity of results as in quantitative research, but as the consistency of the data collection and analysis processes.

Efforts to maintain reliability were made by documenting the entire research process through a transparent audit trail, starting from the informant selection procedure, interview guidelines, to the data analysis stage. The same interview guidelines were used for all informants so that the data obtained had comparable depth. The researchers also verified the data through follow-up interviews with several informants and conducted peer debriefings to review the analysis results and minimize subjective bias. In addition, direct quotes from informants are included in the research report to support the findings and increase data reliability. Through these procedures, this study is expected to produce scientifically accountable findings while providing an accurate picture of chili and tomato seed marketing practices through social media and their relationship with delivery services.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

The respondents in this study consisted of chili and tomato seed entrepreneurs who use social media as their main means of marketing their products. All respondents reside in Bojonegoro Regency, which is known as one of the horticultural centers with high potential for chili and tomato production. The respondents were selected purposively based on certain criteria, namely having actively used social media for at least the past six months, having experience in marketing chili and tomato seeds online, and using delivery services to distribute their products to consumers. Their profiles represent actual digital marketing practices on a small to medium scale based locally.

Most respondents are farmers who also produce chili and tomato seeds, running their businesses independently or with their families. The scale of their businesses is generally household-based, with production capacity limited to local or regional needs. However, there are also several respondents who have developed larger businesses by employing additional workers and expanding their marketing networks. Their experience in seed production varies, ranging from three years to more than a decade. Interestingly, long experience in seed cultivation does not always correlate with the ability to adapt to digital technology. Some respondents who have been in business for a long time still tend to be conventional in marketing their products, while the younger generation of farmers seem to be quicker to adapt to the use of social media.

In terms of educational background, most respondents had a secondary education, with some being graduates of agricultural vocational schools. Only a handful of respondents had a higher education background, but this was not a major obstacle to social media adoption. The more dominant factor was the motivation to expand the market and increase income. Respondents who are aware of digital opportunities are generally more proactive in trying out various social media platforms and content strategies to attract buyers. They acknowledge that social media provides new opportunities to reach consumers outside the Bojonegoro area without the need for large promotional costs.

In terms of the platform used, the majority of respondents preferred Facebook as the main medium for marketing seeds. Facebook is considered more friendly to local communities because it has many buying and selling groups that facilitate direct interaction with potential buyers. In addition, WhatsApp is also used as a means of further communication after potential buyers are interested in the information posted on Facebook. Only a few respondents tried using Instagram, as they believe the platform is more suitable for daily consumption products or lifestyle items, not agricultural commodities. This indicates that the choice of social media platform depends not only on its popularity but also on its perceived effectiveness in reaching the target market.

In terms of motivation, almost all respondents stated that the main reason for using Social media makes it easy to promote and expand buyer networks. Before utilizing social media, seed marketing was only done by word of mouth or through close networks, so the market reach was very limited. With social media, they can display photos and product descriptions,

educate consumers about the advantages of seeds, and build consumer trust through testimonials from previous buyers. Some respondents even use the live broadcast feature to show the seedling process in real time, so that potential buyers feel more confident about the quality of the products offered.

In addition to promotion, respondents also use social media as a means of customer service. They respond to consumer questions, provide advice on seedling care, and follow up on complaints more quickly. This shows that social media is not just a one-way marketing tool, but also a communication bridge that strengthens the relationship between producers and consumers. However, not all respondents are able to utilize social media features to their fullest potential. Some of them still face challenges in creating engaging content, lack the time to manage their accounts, and have limited understanding of platform algorithms.

In terms of product distribution, all respondents acknowledged that delivery services are an important part of their marketing strategy. After potential buyers place an order via social media, the delivery process is carried out by local shipping companies such as JNE, J&T, SiCepat, or private couriers. Some respondents rely on cash on delivery (COD) systems to increase buyer confidence, even though this adds its own challenges in terms of logistics. There are also respondents who limit delivery areas to certain regions to avoid the risk of damage to seedlings due to long-distance travel.

This general overview of respondents shows that even though chili and tomato seedling businesses are relatively small in scale, they have great potential for growth through the use of digital technology. However, their success is not only determined by their ability to promote products on social media, but also by their readiness to manage distribution and after-sales services. This confirms that digital marketing in the agricultural sector cannot be separated from the logistics aspects that support it. These findings provide a basis for further understanding how social media marketing strategies and delivery services are interrelated in maintaining the sustainability of horticultural seedling businesses.

Social Media Marketing Strategy

The social media marketing strategy implemented by chili and tomato seed producers in Bojonegoro is primarily driven by the need to expand their customer base without incurring significant promotional costs. Before social media, seed marketing was generally conducted traditionally through word-of-mouth recommendations, networking, or in-person meetings at local markets. While this method was effective for small-scale businesses, it limited its ability to reach consumers outside the region. With the increase in internet penetration and smartphone use in rural areas, farmers have begun utilizing social media, particularly Facebook, as their primary means of promotion and communication with potential buyers.

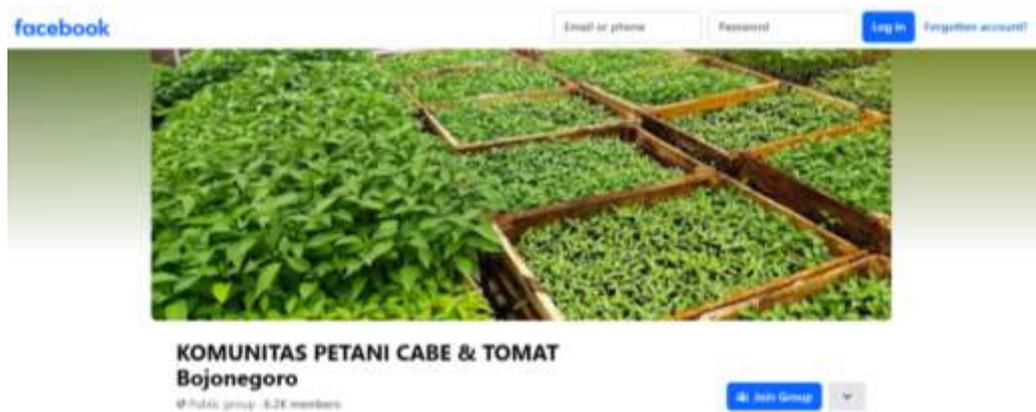


Figure 1. Bojonegoro Chili and Tomato Farmers Community Facebook Group

Facebook was chosen for a reason. This platform is considered more familiar to local communities, as it has numerous community groups focused on buying and selling agricultural products. Through these groups, farmers can upload photos of seedlings, write a brief description of the benefits of the seedlings offered, and list prices and ordering instructions. Some farmers even utilize the live broadcast feature (Facebook Live) to show the seedling care process in real-time, allowing potential buyers to directly assess the quality of the seedlings on offer. This visual approach has been shown to increase consumer trust, as they can see authentic evidence before making a purchase.

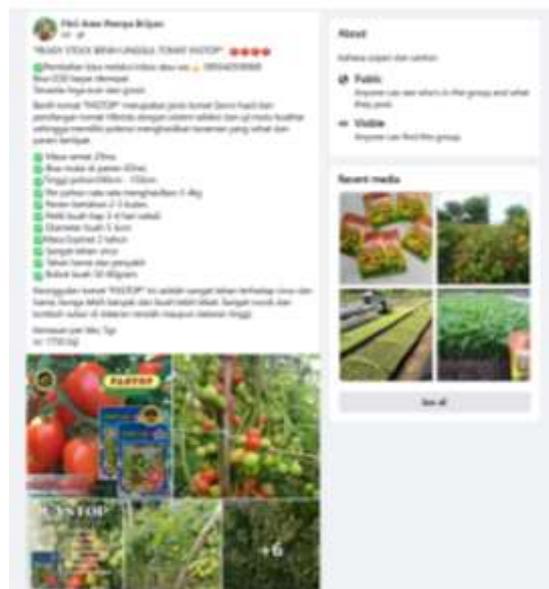


Figure 2. Promotion Through the Facebook Platform

Besides Facebook, WhatsApp also plays a crucial role as a follow-up channel after consumers become interested in a product. After seeing a post on Facebook, potential buyers typically contact the seller via WhatsApp to inquire about further details. Through a personal WhatsApp conversation, sellers can provide more in-depth explanations, send additional photos, or even offer seedling care advice tailored to the buyer's needs. This more personal connection helps build an emotional bond between seller and buyer, ultimately strengthening customer loyalty.

The content strategies employed by seed producers are generally simple yet effective. They upload photos of seedlings packaged ready for shipping, along with descriptions of the seedling type, planting age, potential yield, and selling price. Some more creative sellers include testimonials from previous buyers, further enhancing potential customers' confidence. Others create educational content, including tips for growing chilies and tomatoes for beginners, which not only attracts potential buyers but also increases engagement in the comments section. In this way, their social media accounts serve not only as product showcases but also as valuable sources of information for the farming community.

However, not all farmers possess the same social media content management skills. Most still struggle with visual design, engaging word choice, or strategies for timing posts to maximize views. They also acknowledge that social media algorithms frequently change, sometimes preventing posts from reaching as large an audience as expected. Some farmers try to overcome these challenges by joining more active community groups, utilizing paid features like Facebook ads, or enlisting the help of their more tech-savvy children.

When it comes to interacting with consumers, farmers who are responsive to potential buyers' questions tend to have higher sales rates. They respond quickly to messages, provide clear explanations, and are willing to offer additional services such as seedling care consultations. This demonstrates that speed and quality of response are crucial factors in digital marketing, as consumers who feel well-served are more likely to trust and be loyal. On the other hand, farmers who are less active in monitoring messages often miss out on sales opportunities, as consumers turn to more communicative sellers.

Besides being a promotional medium, social media is also used to build reputation and trust. Some seed producers regularly upload photos of their production process to demonstrate their commitment to maintaining seed quality. Others share success stories of customers who have planted their seeds, thus creating a positive image in the eyes of potential buyers. This approach aligns with the trend of storytelling-based digital marketing, where authentic narratives are more effective at capturing consumer sympathy and interest than mere price promotions.

Interestingly, despite the many conveniences offered by social media, respondents still face a number of challenges. One major obstacle is a lack of digital literacy, particularly among older farmers. They find it difficult to understand more complex social media features, such as creating paid ads or managing large volumes of interactions. Another challenge is time constraints, as farmers must divide their attention between managing seed production and online marketing activities. Furthermore, several respondents revealed that not all consumers who contact them via social media are truly serious about buying; some simply ask questions without following up, wasting time and energy.

Nevertheless, almost all respondents agreed that social media has opened up new opportunities they previously did not have. Wider market reach, ease of communication, and relatively low promotional costs are the main reasons they continue to use social

media despite the challenges they face. This digital-based marketing strategy is considered more flexible than conventional methods, as it can be implemented anytime and anywhere. Furthermore, social media helps build networks among farmers, allowing them to exchange information and even collaborate to meet large consumer demand.

These findings demonstrate that a social media marketing strategy is not simply about posting products online, but also about building sustainable relationships with consumers. Success is determined not only by the platform chosen, but also by creativity in creating content, the ability to respond to consumers, and consistency in maintaining service quality. Thus, social media has become a crucial tool transforming the way chili and tomato seed farmers run their businesses, although it still requires better digital skills to maximize this potential.

Delivery Services and Marketing Support

The success of marketing chili and tomato seeds through social media is inseparable from the role of delivery services as an integral part of the transaction process. While social media is effective in expanding promotional reach and attracting potential buyers, the final stage that determines customer satisfaction is how well the product reaches the buyer in good condition, on time, and at an affordable shipping cost. For sensitive horticultural seed products, delivery is not just a logistical process, but a crucial part of the service that influences consumer trust and loyalty.

Most respondents in this study rely on local expedition services such as JNE, J&T, SiCepat, and private couriers to distribute their products. The choice of delivery service is usually based on considerations of shipping costs, speed of delivery, and reputation for safe delivery. Respondents with customers in nearby areas often use local couriers or private delivery services to ensure the seeds remain fresh and undamaged during transit. Meanwhile, for buyers located outside the district, expedition services are the primary choice despite the greater risks associated with longer and longer shipping distances.

Consumers generally expect the seeds they order to arrive healthy, unwilted, and ready to plant. To meet these expectations, seed producers are implementing various risk mitigation measures, such as safer packaging and the use of additional protective materials. Some respondents package seeds in a moist growing medium to prevent the plants from dehydrating during transit. Others add special instructions to the package to encourage the shipping company to be more careful in handling their shipments. However, despite these measures, cases of seed damage due to late delivery, careless package handling, or extreme weather conditions still occur.

Shipping costs are also a significant factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Respondents revealed that buyers often cancel transactions when shipping costs are deemed too high, especially for longer-distance destinations. In some cases, affordable seed prices become uncompetitive because the total purchase cost increases significantly after shipping costs are added. This has led some producers to limit delivery to specific regions with lower shipping costs. Some producers with larger sales volumes have attempted to partner with shipping companies to obtain special rates, but this is difficult for small businesses.

Besides cost, delivery speed is also a key concern. Chili and tomato seeds have a limited timeframe to remain in prime condition. If shipping takes longer than two to three days, the risk of seedling stress or damage increases dramatically. Respondents acknowledged that regular delivery services sometimes don't meet the needs of horticultural products. To address this, some producers opt for express delivery services, despite the higher costs. Others schedule deliveries only at the beginning of the week to avoid packages being held up in the shipping company's warehouse over the weekend. This practice suggests that producers must adapt their logistics strategies to meet consumer expectations.

Payment systems are also closely linked to the role of delivery services. Many consumers prefer cash on delivery (COD) options due to perceived security. However, not all delivery services offer COD for agricultural products like seeds. Respondents who offer COD stated that this system does increase buyer interest, but adds challenges in managing logistics and additional costs imposed by the shipping company. This demonstrates that integrating payment and delivery services remains an unresolved challenge in the small-scale agricultural sector.

Interestingly, some respondents viewed the role of delivery services not only as product distribution but also as a key factor in determining a business's image. The punctuality and condition of the package received by consumers are often benchmarks for the seller's overall service quality. If a delivery issue occurs, even if it's not the producer's direct fault, consumers still tend to blame the seller. Therefore, farmers or seed producers often choose reputable and more consistent service providers. Some respondents even offered a seed replacement guarantee if damaged in shipping as a commitment to maintaining customer satisfaction, even if this meant incurring additional losses.

These findings demonstrate that digital marketing through social media and logistics services are inseparable. Social media plays a role in opening sales opportunities and expanding buyer networks, while delivery services ensure these transactions are successfully completed. The two form a complementary whole: attractive promotions without reliable distribution support will lose effectiveness, while even the best delivery services will be useless if there is no demand generated from the promotion. This aligns with the concept of integrated marketing, where all elements of the marketing process – from promotion to distribution – must be integrated to create added value for consumers.

However, literature specifically addressing the relationship between social media strategies and delivery services in the context of horticultural products is still limited. Most studies only highlight the effectiveness of social media in increasing sales, without considering the logistical factors that are crucial for sensitive products like chili and tomato seedlings. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that focuses not only on digital promotion but also on strengthening distribution systems that support the sustainability of agricultural businesses.

Social Media and Delivery Service Integration

The integration of social media and delivery services is key to the success of digital marketing for chili and tomato seed products. Social media serves as the first gateway to product introductions, attracting potential buyers, and fostering more personal communication between producers and consumers. However, transactions initiated online only become truly valuable when the ordered product actually reaches the buyer in good condition. Therefore, the roles of social media and delivery services are inseparable; they are complementary elements that determine business sustainability.

For chili and tomato seed producers in Bojonegoro, social media, especially Facebook, is the primary means of reaching a wider market. Through photos, product descriptions, customer testimonials, and educational content, they successfully attract consumers not only from the surrounding area but also from outside the region. When a potential buyer is interested, communication typically shifts to WhatsApp to discuss order details, pricing, and shipping methods. It is at this point that delivery services begin to play a crucial role. Buyers not only want to know the product quality but also how the product will be delivered, how long it will take, and how much shipping costs will be incurred.

Many respondents emphasized that responsiveness on social media must be balanced with speed and certainty of delivery. Consumers will be hesitant if the transaction process takes too long or if the seller doesn't offer clear shipping options. Therefore, some seed producers provide complete information about the shipping service they use, estimated delivery times, and shipping rates from the outset. This helps build consumer trust while minimizing the possibility of order cancellations. Some producers even offer special packages with fixed shipping rates for specific areas, so buyers don't feel burdened by unexpected shipping costs.

This integration process is also evident in how producers manage their shipping schedules. They must align planting and transplanting times with the shipping company's schedule to ensure the seedlings are delivered in optimal condition. Some respondents only send seedlings on certain days, usually at the beginning of the week, to avoid the risk of packages being held up in the shipping company's warehouse over the weekend. This strategy demonstrates that the distribution of horticultural products requires more careful planning than other, more perishable consumer goods. It's clear that engaging digital promotions on social media won't yield optimal results without well-planned logistical support.

Beyond technical aspects, the integration of social media and delivery services also encompasses customer service and experience. In interviews, several respondents revealed that their reputation on social media is highly dependent on the customer experience receiving the product. If seeds arrive in good condition and on time, consumers will leave positive testimonials, which are then shared on social media. These testimonials serve as additional promotional content, boosting the trust of other potential buyers. Conversely, if delivery issues arise, such as delayed or damaged seeds, consumers tend to blame the producer, even if the problem lies with the delivery service

provider. This demonstrates that service responsibility extends beyond promotion and must encompass the entire process, from product delivery to delivery.

Some producers have even pursued more advanced integration by establishing special partnerships with specific delivery services. They choose shipping companies that offer fast service, offer cash on delivery (COD) options, and have a proven track record in handling agricultural products. With these partnerships, producers can provide consumers with greater assurance regarding the speed and safety of delivery. However, not all producers, especially small-scale producers, can afford such partnerships. They continue to rely on publicly available services and face higher risks. This phenomenon of integrating social media and delivery services also highlights the structural challenges facing small agricultural businesses. On the one hand, they must be able to manage dynamic digital marketing, which demands creativity and rapid response. On the other hand, they must contend with limited logistics infrastructure, high shipping costs in certain areas, and a lack of specialized services for horticultural products. This situation forces some producers to only reach markets within a limited radius, thus limiting opportunities for expansion outside their region despite growing demand on social media.

Ideal integration should enable consumers to order seeds online through a simple, transparent, and secure process, and receive the products in good condition without excessive costs. To achieve this, synergy is needed between producers' digital marketing capabilities, social media technology support, and an efficient logistics distribution system. More broadly, this also demonstrates the need for ecosystem support, from both the government and the private sector, to provide more user-friendly delivery services for sensitive agricultural products such as chili and tomato seedlings.

These findings confirm that the success of digital marketing in the agricultural sector is not simply a matter of adopting social media technology, but also the ability to integrate all supporting elements, including logistics and after-sales service. From an integrated marketing theory perspective, social media and delivery services are part of an interconnected value chain. Digital promotion generates demand, while logistics ensures that demand is met effectively. When the two are effectively integrated, not only sales increase but also consumer trust is sustained, ultimately strengthening the resilience of local agricultural businesses.

Research Findings in the Context of Digital Agricultural Marketing

The findings of this study demonstrate that marketing chili and tomato seedlings through social media has significant potential to expand the reach of farmers' markets, increase sales volume, and build closer relationships with consumers. The social media-based marketing strategies employed by respondents – particularly through Facebook and WhatsApp – showed effectiveness in reaching local and regional communities. This aligns with the view of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who stated that social media functions as an interactive platform that enables two-way communication between producers and consumers. In the context of this study, interactions established through

social media are not limited to promotions but also include consulting services, seed education, and direct complaint handling, all of which strengthen consumer loyalty.

Furthermore, these findings support previous research that revealed that social media offers significant opportunities for small businesses in the agricultural sector to reduce promotional costs and expand markets. As several studies have revealed, social media serves not only as a digital storefront for displaying products but also as a means of building brand image and reputation. Respondents in Bojonegoro utilized photos, videos, and testimonials as a form of storytelling to increase consumer trust. This strategy aligns with previous research that emphasizes that authentic visual content and compelling narratives have a strong influence on consumer purchasing decisions for horticultural products.

However, unlike some studies that highlight social media as a dominant factor in increasing sales, this study confirms that digital promotion alone is not sufficient to guarantee successful transactions. Logistics, particularly delivery services, play an equally important role in ensuring consumer satisfaction. Chili and tomato seedlings are sensitive and have a limited shelf life. Therefore, speed and security of delivery are crucial factors in determining marketing success. These findings expand on previous understanding by adding the perspective that digital marketing in the agricultural sector is inseparable from the readiness of distribution infrastructure.

In this regard, this study provides an additional contribution to the literature, which has largely focused on digital marketing from a promotional perspective. The integration of social media and delivery services is a crucial combination for successful horticultural seed marketing. Without fast and affordable delivery support, attractive social media promotions will not lead to successful transactions. Conversely, reliable delivery services will be suboptimal if there is no demand generated from digital promotions. This relationship demonstrates the importance of a holistic approach that views marketing as a system consisting of various mutually supporting elements.

Another relevant finding is the digital literacy barrier among some respondents, particularly older farmers. This confirms previous research that revealed that the level of digital technology adoption among farmers varies and is often hampered by limited knowledge, time, and resources. On the other hand, younger respondents or those with tech-savvy family members tend to be more successful in utilizing social media. This phenomenon demonstrates the need for digital literacy mentoring and training for farmers to maximize the potential of social media as a marketing tool.

This study also found that payment systems influence the choice of delivery service. Many consumers prefer cash on delivery (COD) payment options due to perceived security, but not all delivery services offer this service for agricultural products. This presents an additional challenge for producers, who must reconcile consumer preferences with the limitations of available logistics services. This finding has not been widely discussed in previous literature, providing new insights into the relationship between payment systems, social media, and delivery services.

When linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, these findings suggest that integrating digital marketing and delivery services can be an effective strategy for improving the welfare of smallholder farmers. By expanding market access through social media and ensuring efficient product distribution, chili and tomato seed farmers have a greater opportunity to increase income and strengthen the sustainability of their businesses. This aligns with literature suggesting that digital transformation in the agricultural sector can drive inclusive local economic growth, provided it is supported by adequate logistics infrastructure.

Conceptually, the results of this study reinforce the theory of integrated marketing, which emphasizes the importance of coordination between promotion, distribution, and customer service elements. Social media will only be effective when combined with delivery services that meet consumer expectations. This demonstrates that in the marketing of agricultural products, especially sensitive seeds, success depends heavily on the harmonization of information technology and physical logistics. These findings also highlight a gap in previous research that has focused too much on digital promotion without considering the challenges of on-the-ground distribution.

Thus, this study enriches the scientific discussion on digital marketing in the agricultural sector by demonstrating that social media and delivery services are inseparable. In addition to supporting previous findings on the effectiveness of social media, this study also broadens understanding of the importance of logistics as a key factor in maintaining the sustainability of online horticultural product transactions. Future research could deepen the analysis of more formal integration models between social media platforms, delivery services, and digital payment systems to create a more efficient marketing ecosystem for local agricultural products.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have important practical, theoretical, and policy implications, particularly in the context of supporting food security. Practically, this study demonstrates that utilizing social media as a marketing tool for chili and tomato seedlings can expand market reach, increase interaction with consumers, and reduce promotional costs. However, the success of digital marketing cannot be achieved in isolation; it relies heavily on efficient, fast, and affordable delivery services. For horticultural seed products, the successful delivery of healthy, viable seedlings will ultimately determine the availability of future production plants. In other words, smooth seed distribution is a crucial foundation that indirectly supports the sustainability of the local food supply chain.

Within the framework of food security, quality seeds are the first step in ensuring stable chili and tomato production. An effective digital marketing strategy enables seed farmers to distribute quality seeds to more areas, thereby increasing cultivation potential and maintaining the availability of chili and tomato commodities in the market. However, without adequate logistical support, seed distribution will be hampered and risk seed shortages at the farmer level. The practical implication of these findings is the

need for an integrated marketing approach that focuses not only on digital promotion but also ensures a smooth seed distribution chain for sustainable horticultural food production.

This study also revealed that social media opens opportunities for smallholder farmers to access a wider market without geographical limitations. This has the potential to increase the income of seed farmers and strengthen the sustainability of their businesses. The sustainability of these seed farmers' businesses directly supports food security, as the continuous availability of seeds will ensure stable chili and tomato production. However, obstacles such as low digital literacy, high shipping costs, and the lack of specialized logistics services for sensitive products remain challenges that must be overcome. Therefore, the implication is the need for assistance for farmers in digital literacy and adequate logistics infrastructure support to strengthen the horticultural seed supply chain.

From a policy perspective, this study's findings demonstrate that the success of digital transformation in the agricultural sector must be viewed as part of a broader strategy to support national food security. The government can facilitate collaboration between farming communities, logistics service providers, and digital platforms to ensure more effective seed distribution. Policies such as shipping subsidies for agricultural seeds, the provision of special delivery services for horticultural products, or incentives for logistics operators who support local food products can significantly impact seed availability and, ultimately, food production. Therefore, strengthening social media-based digital marketing systems is also part of efforts to strengthen food security.

Theoretically, this study broadens the understanding of digital marketing in the agricultural sector by emphasizing that social media and delivery services are inseparable elements, especially when discussing products directly related to food security. Most previous literature has emphasized the effectiveness of social media in increasing sales, while under-exploring the role of logistics in maintaining the availability of agricultural inputs such as seeds. This study provides the perspective that the successful distribution of horticultural seeds through the integration of digital promotion and logistics impacts not only the economic benefits of producers but also the stability of food production more broadly.

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth and SDG 2 on zero hunger, these findings have dual relevance. The use of social media integrated with effective logistics services not only improves market access for smallholder farmers but also ensures the availability of seeds, a key factor in food production. With increased access to quality seeds, farmers can maintain their land productivity, thereby maintaining a stable supply of chilies and tomatoes and controlling food prices. This demonstrates that digital transformation in seed marketing not only supports local economic growth but also contributes to national food security.

Another implication is the importance of synergy between stakeholders to ensure the optimal functioning of the digital marketing ecosystem in the agricultural sector. Seed

farmers need support in digital literacy, delivery service providers need regulations that support services specifically for horticultural products, and the government needs to create policies that promote the sustainability of the seed supply chain. If this integration can be achieved, food security will depend not only on the productivity of farmers but also on the smooth distribution of seeds, the foundation of initial production.

Thus, this study confirms that successful digital marketing through social media connected to delivery services not only provides economic benefits for businesses but also serves as a strategic element in supporting food security. High-quality, well-distributed, and sustainably available seeds are key to stable horticultural food production, which ultimately supports broader community food security.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study concludes that the integration of social media marketing—particularly through platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp—and efficient delivery services significantly enhances the market reach, consumer engagement, and income of chili and tomato seedling farmers. The combination of simple yet effective content strategies and reliable logistics not only strengthens consumer trust but also supports sustainable agricultural practices. **Implication :** These findings highlight the critical role of digital literacy and logistics infrastructure in empowering smallholder farmers and advancing national food security. Strengthening these aspects can foster inclusive economic growth while aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). **Limitation :** Nevertheless, the study's qualitative nature and limited regional coverage restrict the generalization of results across diverse agricultural contexts and crop types. **Future Research :** Further studies should adopt quantitative or mixed-method approaches to assess the long-term economic and social impacts of digital marketing and logistics integration, as well as explore the potential of emerging technologies—such as AI-driven marketing analytics and smart logistics systems—in optimizing the horticultural supply chain.

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