

Article

# Marketing Communication Strategies Through Multi-Level Marketing in Promoting Products (Case Study on Leaders and Members of PT. Melia Sehat Sejahtera Bandar Lampung Branch)

Sri Choiriyati<sup>1\*</sup>, Marzuki<sup>2</sup>, M. Amri Qodami<sup>3</sup>, Ahmad Pitra<sup>4</sup>

1,2,3,4 Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung, Indonesia

\* Correspondence: [srichoiriyaty@gmail.com](mailto:srichoiriyaty@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze marketing communication strategies through the Multi-Level Marketing (MLM) system in promoting products to leaders and members of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera Bandar Lampung Branch. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research was conducted using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The research informants consisted of 2 National Leaders, 2 Senior Leaders, and 5 active members who had met the established criteria. The results showed that PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera implemented a comprehensive marketing communication strategy through the 4P approach (Product, Price, Place, Promotion). In terms of products, the company offers Melia Propolis and Melia Biyang which have been certified by BPOM and GMP. Pricing is adjusted to product quality and market segmentation. The selection of strategic stockist locations and the use of offline and online promotional media support marketing effectiveness. Despite facing challenges such as product counterfeiting, stock-outs, and negative perceptions of MLM, the company has managed to maintain its existence for 20 years through a commitment to maintaining product quality, transparency of the business system, and continuous coaching of members and leaders. This research concludes that the success of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera's marketing communication strategy lies in its ability to combine a transparent MLM system with quality products and sustainable member network empowerment, creating a business model that is not only profit-oriented but also provides socio-economic benefits for stakeholders

**Keywords:** Marketing Communication Strategy, Multi-Level Marketing, Melia

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## 1. Introduction

Every institution or company in running its business must be supported by various plans that become the foundation. In preparing a plan, strategic thinking is needed in order to provide a general picture to achieve goals. Communication strategy is quite important to establish good relations between all parties. According to Nayiroh (2020), communication strategy is the use of a combination of communication facets which include communication frequency, communication formality, communication content and communication channels.

Marketing communication strategy is one of the beginnings in order to introduce products to consumers and benefit from the business being run. In marketing there are four mixes known as 4P, namely product, price, place, promotion (Kotler in Trias, 2017: 4). With these 4Ps, it is hoped that members and leaders can maximize in promoting products so that sales can increase with the Multi Level Marketing system.

Multi Level Marketing system. Multi Level Marketing (MLM) is one of the marketing strategies in Indonesia that first appeared in America in the 1930s. MLM emerged as a solution to the many factories that could not distribute their products to consumers.

According to Septiana (2018), MLM or Multi Level Marketing is also known as network marketing, which is one method of entrepreneurial marketing by utilizing a network system.

PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera is one of the MLM companies in Indonesia that has been established since 2003 and works with the largest herbal company in Malaysia, Herbal Science. The Marketing Plan of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera uses a Binary system (two legs) and is the longest-running MLM company in Asia and the second longest in the world using a binary system. PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera has been able to provide solutions to problems that are often found in various other MLM companies such as operational costs for network development, closing points for bonuses, and mere lure (Hidayatul, 2017).

However, from the results of preliminary observations in the field, MLM has an unfavorable or even bad image in the community. Some of the causes are 1) The number of people who falsify products and product packaging that is easy to imitate, 2). Products are often indent / not available, 3) The community considers MLM only benefits certain parties. 4) MLM is equated with Money Game, 5) MLM is considered haram and fraud, 6) MLM is considered less prestigious.

Based on these problems, researchers are interested in analyzing how Multi Level Marketing marketing communication strategies in promoting products to leaders and members of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera Bandar Lampung Branch, with the hope of contributing to the development of the company's marketing strategy.

## **Literature Review**

### **Definition of Communication Strategy**

Strategy or tactics are generally interpreted as outlines of direction for action in an effort to achieve predetermined goals. According to Yolanda (2021) strategy is a tool to achieve company goals in relation to long-term goals, follow-up programs, and resource priorities. Meanwhile, according to Tampubolon (2020) strategy is a formulation of the mission and objectives of the organization which includes an action plan to achieve goals by explicitly considering competitive conditions and the influence of forces from outside the organization.

Communication strategy is a combination of communication planning and management (management communication) in achieving its goals. According to Effendy (2015: 32), in achieving these goals the communication strategy must display its operations tactically, in the sense that the approach can change at any time depending on the situation and conditions. This is important because when you understand the nature of the communicator and the effects caused, the choice of how to communicate becomes very crucial related to the media to be used.

Heris (2016:1) defines communication strategy as a way to organize the implementation of the communication process from planning, implementation to evaluation to achieve a goal. Communication strategy is an important aspect that allows the process of acceleration and sustainability of a development program, especially in marketing.

### **Communication Strategy Function**

According to Effendy (2015: 28) communication strategies have multiple functions, namely:

1. Disseminating informative, persuasive, and instructional communication messages systematically to targets to obtain optimal results.
2. Bridging the phenomenon due to the ease of obtaining and operating the media which is so powerful that if left unchecked it can damage the values that are built.

Priansa (2017: 51) explains that the focus of marketing communication strategy is the performance of an organization. In this case, the focus of marketing strategy connects the

organization with the environment and views marketing as a function that has responsibilities that exceed other functions in business activities. The marketing strategy process has 4 stages, namely strategic situation analysis, marketing strategy preparation, marketing program development, and marketing strategy implementation and control.

### **Definition of Marketing Communication**

Marketing communication is a field that combines communication science with marketing science, giving rise to a new study, namely marketing communication. According to Priansa (2017: 94), marketing communication is an activity with communication techniques that aims to provide company information to its target market.

Rizki (2020) defines marketing communication as a company tool that has the purpose of providing information, persuading, and reminding consumers directly or indirectly about the products or brands they sell. Marketing communication is an activity that seeks to create awareness and knowledge with its various attributes, inform product advantages, create an image and positive attitude and desire to buy a product (Zahra, 2018).

Jannah (2019) explains that marketing communication can be understood by describing its two basic elements, namely communication and marketing. Communication is a process of thought and understanding conveyed between individuals. Marketing is a set of activities where companies transfer values between them and their customers. Thus marketing communication represents the combination of all elements in the brand marketing mix that facilitate exchange by creating a meaning that is disseminated to customers or clients.

### **Functions and Objectives of Marketing Communication**

According to Chrismardani (2014: 178), marketing communication has a major role in terms of product marketing, because it has the ability and superiority in arousing the interest of targeted consumers so that they can be moved to make purchases. With a well-planned marketing communication strategy that includes the use of appropriate communication techniques and media, it will be easy to inform and influence consumers.

Amanah (2018) explains that the objectives of marketing communication include arousing desire for product categories, creating brand awareness, encouraging positive attitudes and influencing purchase intentions and facilitating purchases.

### **Definition of Multi Level Marketing**

Multi Level Marketing (MLM) is one of the marketing strategies with a direct sales system. According to Ahmad Mardalis and Nur Hasanah (2016: 1), MLM is a direct sales system for a product to consumers so that distribution costs are minimal or even zero. MLM does not require promotional costs because it has been handled directly by commercial partners with a tiered system.

Peter J. Clothier (2015) explains MLM as a method of moving products from factories to retail customers. The basic principle is that the sales fleet is developed by the salespeople themselves, where those who try the hardest will reach the highest level and receive the greatest rewards.

### **Characteristics of a True MLM Company**

A true MLM company has several characteristics:

1. Has a SIUPL license (Surat Izin Usaha Penjualan Langsung) as a guarantee of legality from the government.
2. Has a product license according to the category (such as BPOM for health products) as a guarantee of product safety
3. Selling products at realistic prices and according to their economic value
4. Have a transparent and fair commission sharing system
5. Focus on selling products, not recruiting members.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### Research Type and Approach

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine how the Multi Level Marketing Communication Strategy in promoting Products to Leaders and Members at PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera, Bandar Lampung branch. According to Moleong (2005: 4), a qualitative descriptive approach is a research approach where the data collected are words, pictures and not numbers.

Qualitative research is research that does not conduct calculations. Data collected in the form of words and pictures related to activities at PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera. If there are numbers in this study, they are only as support. This research seeks to find complete symptoms about the aspects under study, provide interpretations of the facts found, analyze and interpret data to solve problems.

The focus of this research is to find out the Multi Level Marketing Communication Strategy in promoting Products to Leaders and Members at PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera, Bandar Lampung branch. The criteria for informants needed are Willing to provide information about the object of research, Knowing a lot of information about the object of research, Leaders who have joined for more than 5 years, Members who have joined for under 3 years, Leaders and Members who reside in Bandar Lampung. Informants in this study are National Leaders - 2 people, Senior Leaders - 2 people and active members - 5 people.

### Source and Type of Data

#### 1. Primary Data

According to Ruslan (2017: 138) primary data sources are data that are directly obtained from the source and processed by researchers themselves. Primary data is obtained through interviews with members and leaders of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera who are competent and experts in their fields.

#### 2. Secondary Data

Secondary data according to Ruslan (2017: 138) is supporting data obtained indirectly or through intermediary media. For example, documentation of New Member Training (NMT) activities, digital media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok), and catalog books.

### Data Collection Techniques

Referring to Asril (2021), the data collection techniques used:

1. Observation - Direct observation of member and leader activities in promoting products.
2. Documentation - Collecting written documents such as notes, announcements, instructions, reports related to the research focus.
3. Interview - Conducting dialogs to obtain information directly from informants by asking questions related to marketing communication strategies.

While the Data Analysis Technique consists of:

1. Data Reduction - Selection and simplification of raw data from field notes.
2. Data Presentation - Systematic arrangement of information for taking action and drawing conclusions.
3. Drawing Conclusions - Comparing and connecting data that has been arranged to answer research problems.

Data validity Using triangulation of data sources by exploring the truth of information through different sources using the same method. Researchers checked data from informants and re-examined the results of interviews. The research was conducted at MSS Stockist Jl. Purnawirawan Raya No.65, RT.02 / LK.II, Gunung Terang Kec. Langkapura Bandar Lampung in the period October 2022 - February 2023.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Marketing Communication Strategy of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera

Marketing communication strategies are needed by companies to increase sales. PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera uses a multi-level marketing system where active members act as distributors and promoters. The marketing communication strategy implemented includes 4P (Product, Price, Place, Promotion).

##### a. Product.

PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera provides two health products, namely Melia Propolis and Melia Biyang, which have been circulating for 20 years. Both of these products have been licensed by BPOM and Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP). Melia Propolis has the main function as an anti-virus, bacteria and fungi. This product is available in 3 sizes:

**Table 1.** Melia Propolis Product Variants

No	Ukuran	Harga
1	6 ml	Rp 85.000
2	30 ml	Rp 225.000
3	55 ml	Rp 340.000

While Melia Biyang serves to delay premature aging by stimulating the production of Human Growth Hormone (HGH). This product is only available in 15 ml size with a price of IDR 275,000.

Based on interviews with informants, both products have very good quality with BPOM and GMP standards. The product has a distinctive taste which is bitter and astringent, but can be reduced by mixing mineral water. Product durability reaches 5 years according to BPOM standards. However, sometimes there are stock vacancies so members have to borrow products from other members to meet consumer demand.

##### b. Price

The price set is in accordance with the quality of the product provided. Although some lower middle class people consider the price quite expensive, for the upper middle class the price is considered affordable considering the benefits obtained.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Member and Consumer Prices

Produk	Harga Member	Harga Konsumen
Propolis 6ml	Rp 85.000	Rp 100.000
Propolis 30ml	Rp 225.000	Rp 236.000
Propolis 55ml	Rp 340.000	Rp 396.000
Biyang 15ml	Rp 275.000	Rp 300.000

##### c. Place

PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera has its head office in South Jakarta with branches (stockists) spread throughout Indonesia. Lampung stockist is located on Jl. Purnawirawan Raya No.65 Gunung Terang which is considered strategic because it is in the middle of the city, easily accessible by public / private transportation, close to the distributor network, listed on Google Maps.

#### d. Promotion

The promotional strategies carried out include:

**Table 3.** Promotion Strategy of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera

Media	Jenis Promosi	Keterangan
Offline	Door to door	Kunjungan langsung ke konsumen
	Sebar brosur	Penyebaran brosur di masyarakat
	Seminar	Sosialisasi produk dan bisnis
Online	WhatsApp	Promosi via status dan chat
	Facebook	Posting produk dan testimoni
	Instagram	Konten promosi visual

- Effectiveness of Marketing Communication Strategy

Based on data on the number of members and leaders in 2019-2022:

**Table 4.** Number of Members and Leaders 2019-2022

Tahun	Jumlah Member	Jumlah Leader
2019	240	30
2020	264	34
2021	252	39
2022	200	32

There have been fluctuations in the number of members and leaders due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the marketing communication strategy implemented has proven effective in maintaining the company's existence for 20 years, building consumer confidence in the product, creating a wide distribution network and providing income opportunities for members.

- Obstacles and Solutions

- i. Some of the obstacles faced Product counterfeiting - Overcome by educating the characteristics of the original product, Stock vacancies - Overcome by stock system between members, Negative perceptions of MLM - Overcome by transparency of business systems and market competition - Overcome by improving service quality.
- ii. Strategies that need to be improved Strengthening Company branding, Optimizing digital promotions, Developing human resources for members and leaders and Innovating products and services.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion of the Multi Level Marketing Communication Strategy in Promoting Products (Study on Leaders and Members at PT. Melia Sehat Sejahtera Bandar Lampung Branch in 2022), several important conclusions can be drawn.

PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera implements a comprehensive marketing communication strategy through a multi-level marketing system. This strategy has proven effective by cutting the conventional distributor channel and making members as consumers as well as product marketers. Costs that should be incurred to pay distributors are diverted into



bonuses for members, creating a mutually beneficial system between the company and members. This makes PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera not only act as a provider of quality health products but also provide income opportunities for the people of Indonesia.

The implementation of marketing communication strategies is carried out through an integrated 4P (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) approach. In terms of products, Melia Propolis and Melia Biyang have obtained BPOM and GMP certifications as quality assurance. Pricing is adjusted to the quality and benefits of the products, although there is a different segmentation between middle to lower and upper middle class consumers. The selection of strategic stockist locations and the use of various promotional media both offline and online also support marketing effectiveness.

Despite facing various challenges such as product counterfeiting, stock shortages, and negative perceptions of MLM, PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera has managed to maintain its existence for 20 years. This is achieved through the company's commitment to maintaining product quality, transparency of the business system, and continuous coaching of members and leaders. Fluctuations in the number of members and leaders, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, were overcome by adapting a more flexible marketing strategy.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the success of PT Melia Sehat Sejahtera's marketing communication strategy lies in its ability to combine a transparent MLM system with quality products and sustainable member network empowerment. This creates a business model that is not only profit-oriented, but also provides socio-economic benefits for its stakeholders.

This conclusion is expected to contribute to the development of a more effective MLM marketing strategy and become a reference for further research in the field of marketing communication and network-based business development

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