

# The role of social capital in network business sustainability (case study of a group of product marketers using a network system in Ponorogo)

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## Abstract

The existence of a product marketing team with a network system has been able to lift the economy in Ponorogo City. They are required to continue to innovate to maintain and advance their business even though they use a network system to market. So that strategy is very necessary in maintaining business so that business can be carried out by all groups with various strategies that are adapted to the marketer's age. This research aims to understand and describe the competitive development efforts of marketers with network systems so that they are able to maintain and compete with companies with similar systems. This research uses a qualitative approach with purposive sampling techniques to determine research subjects. Data mining techniques use in-depth interviews and observation. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique uses an Interactive Model. The research results conclude that 1. Network business is an interesting and developing phenomenon to date. 2. Strengthening groups in network business is carried out to maintain clarity of rules, strengthen trust among members and develop business networks. 3. Strengthening groups in network business has been able to develop the business, be able to compete and maintain the business and the group or team has become stronger and developed well.

## Keywords

Social capital, Network system marketing, Network business sustainability

## Introduction

The existence of marketing a product through a network system in urban areas is often considered as one of the economic activities that is developing as a result of the imbalance between workforce growth and job provision. Those who enter the network marketing business are mostly from low-income, low-educated, and less skilled groups. Although their background is not professional entrepreneurs and have large capital, many of them have succeeded in developing their businesses and are even able to provide jobs for others. The 21st century has led some business firms to a new set of marketing beliefs and practices that aim to develop deep and lasting marketing

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partnerships with people and organizations that directly or indirectly influence the success of the company's marketing activities. Network marketing aims to build long-term, mutually satisfying relationships in order to gain and maintain business continuity.

Developing strong relationships with consumers requires an understanding of their capabilities and resources, as well as their needs, goals, and desires. The end result of marketing through partnerships is a unique company asset called a marketing network. A marketing network consists of companies and their supporting stakeholders, namely customers, employees, suppliers, distributors, retailers, advertising agencies, scientists and others or with which the company has built a profitable business partnership. The principle of running is very simple, by building an effective partnership network with key stakeholders and the benefits will follow. In order to establish a marketing partnership, one of them is to improve the service quality process. Because service quality affects customer satisfaction which has an impact on customer loyalty.

Sheth and Parvatiyar (2002) provide an opinion that there are three things that need to be considered in network marketing. First, network marketing has a comprehensive relationship between marketers, suppliers, customers and creates togetherness. The concept of network marketing is different from the concept of marketing. Second, network marketing requires an interactive process, not exchange and transaction as with marketing principles. Third, network marketing is an activity that is interdependent and prioritizes cooperation between producers and customers. Based on this idea, network marketing as a discipline is not much different from consumer behavior or marketing strategy. Network marketing emphasizes the importance of maintaining relationships with customers, suppliers, and distributors to maintain the survival of an organization. Network marketing has its own activities as a discipline in the marketing activity development program. Such thoughts or ideas were expressed by Hunt (2002) that business partnerships are a form of network marketing. Efforts to unite a thought or idea in uniting their resources in a business have the intention of achieving what has become the initial goal and is right on target and can be exchanged with each other which is realized is not easy to achieve individually.

Changes in marketing conditions like this are caused by the rapid development of technology from year to year. The main factor that plays a major role in competitive advantage in a competitive situation is by increasing the ability to maintain customer loyalty (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Customer loyalty is a key measure of a company's success not only in the short term but also a competitive advantage in the long term. The partnership approach emphasizes the importance of good long-term relationships with customers, suppliers, agents and retailers. In the organizational structure, this awareness can be realized through a commitment to getting customers and being trusted, the hope is to influence customer loyalty, so that all members of the organization must understand the intent and purpose of network marketing (Garbarino and Mark, 1999). Based on the development of network marketing is a strategy that includes service quality, pricing relationships, consumer relationships, additional

services and internal marketing (Berry and Paimer, 2002). The main service is basically built by attracting customers to find out their needs and desires, building business segments with long-term service quality.

## Problem formulation

1. What is the strategy implemented to sell products using a network system in Ponorogo City?
2. How to maintain and increase product sales with network model marketing in Ponorogo City?

## Literature review

### *Social capital*

Social capital is fundamentally defined as a resource embedded within social relationships that are institutionalized through shared life experiences, social roles, systems of authority and responsibility, reward mechanisms, and other forms of social bonding that ultimately encourage collective action. In this context, social capital serves as a valuable theoretical lens for understanding the foundation of sustainable and inclusive development (Fathy & Rusydan, 2019).

According to Wirutomo (2012), social capital can be categorized alongside other forms of capital such as financial, physical, and human capital. Each type of capital operates through distinct processes and patterns, contributing both to economic gains and to social cohesion. Specifically, social capital refers to the relationships and networks shaped by social norms, which function as a binding force that fosters unity and cooperation among members of a community or group. Individuals who are actively engaged in these social networks can leverage the embedded social resources not only for individual advancement but also for achieving collective goals, thus reinforcing the dual benefits, economic and social of strong social capital.

Social capital has been conceptualized in various ways by different scholars, highlighting its multidimensional nature. Uphoff, as cited in Hobbs (2000), views social capital as a cumulative construct comprising social, psychological, cultural, institutional, and other intangible assets that collectively shape cooperative behavior among individuals and groups. Similarly, Putnam (2000) characterizes social capital through the presence of social institutions—such as networks, shared norms, and trust—that enable coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Meanwhile, Partha and Ismail (2009) emphasize the role of social capital in forming relationships and norms that determine both the quality and quantity of social interactions within a community. They describe it as a kind of “social glue” that binds group members together and sustains social cohesion. Collectively, these perspectives underscore the importance of social capital as a foundational element for collective action and community resilience.

Based on the concept and views on social capital as expressed by a number of experts, this study uses the concept of social capital as a shared network with norms, trust and understanding that facilitates cooperation between or among groups. Social capital refers to institutions, relationships, norms that shape the quality and quantity of social interactions in a society. In principle, social capital discusses bonds, connections, relationships or social cohesion (Fathy & Rusydan, 2019). Social capital has 3 main elements and components, where these three elements contain elements, components, resources and elements that are very important in social capital, namely trust, values and norms and networks. Trust is a variable that is considered very important in the continuity of a business. Because the existence of trust is expected to facilitate partnerships and develop a network. However, trust is not only based on face-to-face relationships between two or more people. Trust can be an attribute of institutions and groups or individuals and is often based on reputation mediated by a third party (Dasgupta, 2000). So the role of trust plays a vital role in gaining access to network benefits. The trust factor is considered very important as the basis for a strategic relationship. Without trust, the relationship will not run smoothly and in the long term.

Consumer trust is all the knowledge possessed by consumers and all the conclusions made by consumers about objects, attributes, and their benefits. The object can be a product, person, company and anything in which someone has a trust. While attributes are characteristics that are owned or not owned by the object. So, Morgan and Hunt (1999) interpret trust as the key to a relationship marketing model. In accordance with the theory that the higher the level of trust between the seller and the buyer, the greater the opportunity to continue a relationship in a sustainable and continuous time. Trust enhances human ability to cooperate not based on rational cognitive calculations, but with consideration of a buffer measure between the very necessary and expected desires that will be partially not disappointing.

Norms represent a crucial component of social capital, emerging not through bureaucratic mandates or government intervention, but rather through long-standing traditions, historical experiences, and the influence of charismatic figures who shape patterns of behavior within individuals or communities. These norms develop organically and serve as informal regulatory frameworks that help align personal interests with collective goals, thereby fostering the spontaneous growth of social capital within society.

Norms become a basis or role model in an organization or company that becomes a basis for acting and determining a decision. Rules can be defined as standards that are owned by a person, organization, or company about what is right and what is wrong, about what is good and what is not good (Satyanugraha, 2003). So in this case, rules become very important to carry out a business whose goal is to be in accordance with the specified target and provide a good impact on the sustainability of a business. Rules can be divided into three forms (DeGeorge, 1999) first, descriptive ethics which explains

how to recognize, compare and distinguish various moral systems, practices, beliefs, principles and different values.

The second is normative ethics which is an understanding obtained from descriptive ethics and tries to continue to develop an integrated system of rules. Third, meta ethics is a study of normative ethics. In this case it is often referred to as analytical ethics. This meta ethics is closely related to the term moral which includes explanation and assessment as well as investigation of an argument.

Social networks (networks) are one of the social dimensions besides trust and rules. The concept of networks in the concept of social capital focuses more on the aspect of ties between nodes which can be people or groups (organizations). So in this case there is an understanding of the existence of social relations that are bound by trust which trust is maintained and guarded by existing norms.

In this network concept there is an element of work that through the media of social relations becomes cooperation. Basically, social networks are formed because of mutual curiosity, mutual information, mutual reminders, and mutual assistance in carrying out or overcoming something. The social concept in social capital refers to all relationships with other people or groups that allow activities to run efficiently and effectively (Lawang, 2005).

Studies on networks in a socio-economic perspective are still dominated by topics that link social networks to welfare, poverty, or economic development in general. Most of the social systems of Indonesian society have structural and cultural specifications, which contain social capital with diverse potentials, so that the development and empowerment of social networks are also relatively different and related to the nature of social ties in each region. Therefore, it is very important to analyze the aspects of bond strength (weak or strong), connecting aspects (weak or strong), and linking aspects (weak or strong) in the development of social networks.

### *The role of social capital for network business*

Social capital serves as a driving force for development, as it significantly influences the resilience of communities and their capacity to address emerging challenges. By fostering mutual trust, collaboration, and shared norms, social capital empowers communities to pursue and achieve their goals autonomously and effectively. While social capital has broad applicability across various sectors, it is particularly vital in community empowerment initiatives. Increasingly, attention to the role of social capital is being directed toward local economic development strategies, especially in efforts to reduce poverty and enhance the well-being of marginalized groups.

According to Putnam, as cited in Field (2005), social capital is characterized by patterns of social life that encompass networks, shared norms, and mutual trust, which collectively enable individuals to collaborate effectively in pursuit of common objectives. In this sense, social capital plays a pivotal role in strengthening relational ties that contribute to the achievement of shared goals. Turner (2007) further emphasizes



the practical value of social capital, noting that strong ethnic relations within local communities can significantly support the reliability and success of small-scale entrepreneurs. Through these relationships, small business owners gain access to beneficial resources such as low-interest credit, mutual financial support during periods of high demand, shared equipment, and vital product information. Moreover, these social networks contribute to the overall operational effectiveness and profitability of many small enterprises, underscoring the critical role of social capital in sustaining local economic activities.

In network business, the model proposed here suggests that groups of companies can rely on the help of trust facilitators (leaders) to improve the aggregate trust relationship. In a process of improvement.

## Method

Based on the problems raised in this study, the data to be collected is various information in the form of descriptions (including the meaning behind the description of the data). The various information in question was obtained from individuals marketing products with a network system in Ponorogo City. Thus, this study will be more appropriate using a Qualitative Approach.

The research is more directed at the type of Case Study research, namely revealing and examining in depth the business activities and strategies applied to develop a business with marketing through a network system in Ponorogo. According to Yin (2012), a case study is a research strategy, an empirical study that investigates a symptom in a real-life setting. This strategy can include quantitative evidence that relies on various sources and previous developments from theoretical propositions. The subjects of this study were individuals who were members of a group of product marketers with a network system who had successfully developed their businesses in Ponorogo City. The determination of the research subjects used Purposive Sampling, namely the researcher determined in advance who the informants were, and stated their respective statuses according to the wishes or objectives of the study. The status of each informant was a business actor marketing products with a network system.

The data collection technique used in-depth interviews, namely the technique of obtaining information directly through requests for information from first parties who were considered able to provide information or answers to the questions asked (Mukhtar, 2013). With this technique, the research subjects were more open and freer in providing information or data, and expressing their experiences regarding the research problems. In addition, data collection was also carried out through direct observation or observation, namely the researcher conducted systematic observations and recording of the symptoms or phenomena being investigated (Mukhtar, 2013).

Data collection is a process that takes place throughout the research using a set of prepared instruments, in order to obtain data information through in-depth interviews

and observations. Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying and abstracting, and transforming raw data that appears in writing field notes. Data display is an effort to organize organized information in an effort to describe conclusions and take action. Verification and drawing conclusions are analysis activities, where in the early stages of data collection, an analyst begins to decide whether something is meaningful, or does not have regularity, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal relationships, and propositions (Mukhtar, 2013).

## Results and discussion

### Research results

Marketing with a network system is one of the marketing systems that utilizes customers as a distribution network. This marketing concept provides an opportunity for consumers or customers to be able to be actively involved as sellers and gain benefits from their partnership lines. Members who join in it are called distributors or business partners. This marketing concept is a modern marketing concept through the development of distribution channels that are built permanently by positioning customers as well as marketing staff.

In terms of the profit sharing system in a business with this network system, distributors directly receive rewards from direct comparisons of efforts made directly. In this case, network system marketing is currently considered to have advantages that can be multiplied when compared to direct sales (conventional) where large profits are only obtained by owners and directors of various companies. And very rarely are these benefits also felt directly by retail store sales employees. However, they are superior workers and hard workers. And product sales in this network marketing system are carried out directly (Direct selling).

Developing a marketing network requires a development system that has been set by the company to accelerate business movement. For this reason, the company holds training and training specifically for new business partners intended to facilitate the development of the business. There are several levels of training for business partners according to the level and level of sales achievement. In addition to training held directly by the company, each sales team holds home sharing intended to directly follow up on the knowledge contained in the company's training. So in this case there is strong cooperation between business partners and the company in an effort to develop product marketing through a network system.

Company training and training can indeed help the size of the business. However, in general, the main factor that can help the most in developing a business with a good network system cannot be separated from mutual trust. Trust is the main factor in efforts to develop a network system business. This is because the network system must have a reseller team that is certainly related to business development activities. With

high trust, efforts to develop distribution channels do not take long to be able to generate turnover in accordance with company regulations.

### Discussion

Management of network business cannot be separated from strengthening the group in which it has been mutually agreed upon, both regarding the rules that must be implemented, the trust built by the group, and efforts to develop a wider network.

The rules built in network business begin with an informal explanation, namely in the form of group discussions, or in the form of training as a reinforcement of the spirit of developing network business. The important materials presented in the training are network business rules and group network development materials. In addition, communication and convincing techniques are also presented to prospective buyers and prospective new group members.

Network business is inseparable from the emphasis of trust among group members. This trust is important and is always built through mutual communication, both indirectly and through several meeting activities that are usually carried out to find out the development of the group. In meeting activities, group leaders play a very important role because they must be able to provide solutions if there are problems and provide encouragement to group members to be more able to develop their networks. Based on the discussion of the findings of this study, the pattern of network business development strategies can be described in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Pattern of network business development strategies

### Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion in this study, several important conclusions can be drawn. First, network-based businesses remain a dynamic and evolving phenomenon. The collaborative nature of these businesses, which rely on interconnected individuals or groups, continues to grow and attract interest due to their flexibility and potential for collective advancement. Second, the strengthening of groups within these network



businesses plays a critical role in sustaining their success. This group reinforcement involves the establishment of clear and mutually agreed-upon rules, the cultivation of trust among members, and the strategic expansion of business connections. These elements are essential in creating a solid foundation for cooperation and long-term engagement. Lastly, the study finds that such group strengthening efforts have significantly contributed to business development. The ability of these groups to grow, compete effectively, and sustain their business operations over time reflects the importance of internal cohesion and network collaboration. As a result, the groups involved in network businesses have not only maintained stability but have also shown meaningful progress and resilience in the face of various challenges.

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