

# Mobile vegetable vendors: A sustainable communication perspective

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## Abstract

Mobile vegetable vendors, known as 'eyek,' offer a promising community-level marketing network throughout Magelang Regency, providing MSME items directly to clients' doorsteps due to their extensive presence and strong customer relationships. Furthermore, eyek relies on word-of-mouth marketing to reach their target audience. With the background information provided, this study aims to explore trust-building measures between MSMEs and mobile vegetable vendors. The qualitative methodology employs in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) in a phenomenological data collection approach, accompanied by inductive data analysis. The findings emphasize the Eyek Community's vital role in Magelang's trading sustainability and group communication efficiency. The presence of shared rules and conventions fosters a collective commitment. Effective group communication is essential for enhancing the program's direct and personal sales approach, nurturing community bonds, increasing engagement, understanding needs and challenges, resolving issues, establishing trust, and maintaining consistent information delivery.

## Keywords

Mobile vegetable vendors, Communication, MSMEs

## Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in a country's economy. MSMEs often face challenges in marketing their products due to limited resources and access to a wider market. Therefore, efforts are needed to support the marketing of MSME products, including mobile vegetable vendors. According to data from the Department of Trade, Cooperatives, and MSMEs (Disdagkop and UKM), as of 2022, there were 87,287 MSMEs in Magelang Regency with a workforce absorption rate of 40.92%. This data shows that Magelang Regency has a strong economic base with a large number of MSMEs and their absorption of the workforce.

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MSMEs generally deal with marketing issues in addition to production-related issues. Even though it's a persistent problem, many MSMEs still run against obstacles that prevent them from expanding. Because they are unable to compete in the marketing industry, several MSMEs are compelled to close their doors. In light of this, networks must be established and MSMEs must get assistance in order for their companies to grow and prosper, which will ultimately help other industries.

One extremely potential marketing network that may be used at the community level is that of mobile vegetable vendors, or 'pedagang eyek.' These suppliers, who are dispersed throughout practically the whole Magelang Regency, are thought to be able to provide MSME goods closer to the homes of customers. The close relationship that mobile vegetable vendors have with their clients further reinforces this, giving them a powerful tool for selling MSME goods.

According to Kotler (2017) as cited in [1], marketing strategy is a mindset to be used in order to achieve marketing objectives within a company. This can encompass specific strategies for target markets, positioning, marketing mix, and the amount of marketing expenditure. In this case, vegetable marketing is the communication activity between mobile vegetable vendors and customers who wish to buy vegetables. Therefore, vegetable marketing strategy consists of a series of activities organized to achieve predefined objectives. With the right strategy, vegetable sales can be optimized.

Based on information from Disdagkop and UKM, there were approximately 2,031 mobile vegetable vendors in Magelang Regency in 2022. Mobile vegetable vendors are a crucial part of the local agricultural product marketing network. They connect vegetable producers with consumers in the surrounding areas. By harnessing the potential of the local market, mobile vegetable vendors can help promote and sell MSME products to the local community.

Mobile vegetable vendors, despite their seemingly ordinary appearance, employ unique and brilliant strategies for businesses that appear simple. What's more interesting is the strategies and tricks that can make housewives in residential areas become loyal customers to mobile vegetable vendors. On the surface, mobile vegetable vendors often provide excellent service with a simple background. They frequently engage in friendly conversations with their customers while offering their products. In marketing, this is called 'Building Rapport,' a strategy to build a friendly relationship to foster mutual understanding. This technique requires good communication skills to achieve the goal of providing solutions to customers and persuading them to make purchases.

Mobile vegetable vendors often inquire about their customers' needs and offer to help find what they are looking for. The next day, they deliver what their customers need. This way, they implement the concept of taking orders. Understanding customers' needs in promoting their products, vegetable vendors sometimes share information about the benefits of the vegetables or fruits they are selling.

Mobile vegetable vendors can be successful not just because of their merchandise but because they have an in-depth knowledge of their customers' lives. Successful branding is about building a trusted story. Additionally, word of mouth marketing strategy is crucial for mobile vegetable vendors to reach their customers. Based on the background information provided, this research aims to understand how to build trust between mobile vegetable vendors and MSMEs to establish cooperation.

## Method

This research employs a qualitative method. Data collection in this study uses the phenomenological approach technique, which involves in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and utilizes inductive data analysis. The phenomenological approach is based on Marlina [2]. Informant selection is done using purposive sampling with specific criteria. The informant criteria are as follows: members of Eyek community located in Magelang Regency, members of Eyek community originating from the primary supply areas, members of Eyek community whose distribution area is in Magelang Regency, and Eyek who have unwittingly brought products from MSMEs in Magelang Regency as their merchandise.

Once the data is collected, the analysis phase for formulating the model is conducted in several stages. First, the transcription process of the interview data is carried out for all the interviews conducted. This stage is then followed by categorizing the experiences of the mobile vegetable vendor and MSMEs communities.

## Results and Discussion

### *Eyek communities and MSMEs producers*

The establishment of eyek communities such as Sayur Balap Merbabu (SBM), Sayur Wonolelo Merbabu (SWM), Sayur Lereng Merapi (SLM), Tegalrejo Candimulyo Pakis Vegetable Association (STCP), and Borobudur Vegetable Market Traders (PPSB) is evidence of the collectivity of eyek traders in Magelang Regency. Furthermore, vegetable traders and 'eyek' sellers also form a community on the social media platform Facebook with an account called 'Komunitas Pedagang Sayur & Eyek Magelang' (Vegetable Traders & Eyek Community Magelang). The 'eyek' sellers' community engages in regular activities such as group savings, shared holidays, and joint religious study sessions.

The informants reported that they have benefited from being part of the 'eyek' community. For instance, they share information about where to obtain high-quality and affordable goods. Additionally, community members can exchange experiences, problems, and solutions. One issue that the communities have collectively resolved is the distribution of the 'eyek' market areas.

## 1. Marketing communication patterns of eye to customers

### a. Smooth communication of mobile vegetable vendors

Mobile vegetable vendors possess excellent communication skills with their customers. They typically use a light-hearted communication style with their customers to build a sense of closeness. Meanwhile, Navis adds that effective speaking skills are necessary to convince buyers while presenting their merchandise.

### b. Direct and online

Marketing communication carried out by mobile vegetable vendors tends to be of a personal selling nature. Mobile vegetable vendors engage in both online and offline promotion. During the FGD and interviews, it was revealed that mobile vegetable vendors save the WhatsApp numbers of their customers. Consequently, they can inform customers about their selling plans through WhatsApp stories, as presented in [Figure 1](#).



[Figure 1](#). Online Marketing by Mobile Vegetable Vendors (Source: own documentation)

### c. Familial interaction

The interaction between mobile vegetable vendors and their customers creates a familial communication atmosphere. Ultimately, this leads to harmonious relationships between the two. In fact, mobile vegetable vendors often attend their customers' important events, and vice versa.

### d. Persuading buyers

When encountering customers who are unsure or hesitant about the quality of their merchandise, mobile vegetable vendors persuade customers by not denigrating other products. Instead, they highlight the merits of their products based on their own experiences.

## 2. MSMEs producers

### a. Distribution of MSMEs products

MSMEs participants express their opinions regarding the distribution of their MSMEs products. Khariri, a tofu producer in the Borobudur area, mentions that

his tofu products are directly distributed to the market by his wife, but there are also instances where tofu is taken directly by mobile vegetable vendors.

b. MSMEs strives to maintain product quality

MSMEs participants now have the awareness to maintain the quality of their products.

c. Product retrieval system

Meanwhile, from the MSMEs perspective, two different views on the product retrieval system are found. Firstly, products brought by mobile vegetable vendors can be returned if they are damaged or if there is leftover merchandise. This condition is also mentioned by Dwi, a tempeh producer in Borobudur. He explains that if there are complaints from customers about their products, they make an effort to provide the best service by offering replacements.

However, some MSMEs participants tend to implement a no-return system. This difference likely depends on the type of MSMEs products being produced. MSMEs participants with products that have a short shelf life may choose a no-return product retrieval system, while those with products that have a longer shelf life may allow returns.

### 3. Group communication in the eyek community

The Eyek Community in the Magelang region plays a significant role in the sustainability of trading activities and the effectiveness of group communication. This is evident in the process of sharing information among group members in locations where they obtain affordable and quality merchandise. Within the group, members of the Eyek community find it easier to share experiences and seek solutions to the problems they encounter. This aligns with [3], who emphasized the significant role of group members in providing input to solve issues.

Groups require communication to support cohesion within a group. Additionally, groups enable us to share information, experiences, and knowledge with other members [3]. The presence of a group in a society is reflected in the functions it carries out. According to Bungin in [4], the functions include:

a. Social relationship function

Communities can maintain and strengthen social relationships among their members, such as engaging in informal, relaxed, and entertaining activities. The Eyek vendor community has routine activities such as gatherings, holidays, and religious study sessions.

b. Educational function

Groups, both formally and informally, work to achieve and exchange knowledge.

c. Persuasion function

Group members attempt to persuade each other to take or avoid certain actions based on their experiences. For example, they exchange information and

preferences for locations to obtain affordable and high-quality merchandise. Additionally, community members can share their experiences, issues, and solutions to address them.

d. Problem-solving function

This process relates to discovering solutions that were previously unknown, while decision-making is related to choosing between two or more solutions. An issue that the community has collectively addressed is the distribution of Eyek vendor territories.

There are several rules and norms agreed upon collectively regarding the distribution of territories. Although under certain circumstances, there is some flexibility in the rules allowing members to enter the same distribution areas, leading to a high level of trust within this community. Trust forms the basis of the Eyek community's work, uniting all members in cooperation and healthy competition. Furthermore, members have their own distribution territories, and some serve different segments.

Neither individuals nor groups are consistently focused on a single task. A group comprises individuals with diverse interpersonal connections. For the organization to achieve success and for its members to feel fulfilled and productive, it is essential to maintain these connections [5]. The eyek trader community is a unique non-formal group. The unity of eyek traders in Magelang district is proven by the formation of eyek communities, such as Sayur Balap Merbabu (SBM), Sayur Wonolelo Merbabu (SWM), Sayur Lereng Merapi (SLM), Tegalrejo Candimulyo Pakis Vegetable Association (ISTCP), and Borobudur Vegetable Market Traders (PPSB).

Furthermore, vegetable vendors and mobile vegetable vendors also form a community on the social media platform Facebook under the account "Komunitas Pedagang Sayur & Eyek Magelang." However, like small groups in general, the Eyek community also has limitations in its structure and assignments. The community serves as a friendly gathering place, a group's personality, unity, commitment to tasks, and its size is evident from the thousands of Eyek community members. Informal Group is a group formed by members of an organization who share common interests. These informal groups are typically not formally structured and are not officially established by the organization. Informal Groups arise in response to the need for social relationships [6]. There are unwritten norms that bind the members to each other, forming the group's commitment. Most importantly, group members have a degree of interdependence but are also competitors.

The process of shared perception and agreement within a group is an implementation of effective group communication. On the other hand, group decisions can also be influenced by social influence. According to Pavit in [7] there are three processes of social influence that affect group decisions:

a. Argumentation

The pattern of communication by the group leader during discussions is informal and occurs in every decision-making process shared with group members.

b. Comparison

The group leader provides preferences for merchandise, but these preferences are not coercive. The group leader tends to offer preferences and guidance based on non-binding experiences. The comparison of merchandise and prices is actually more influenced by consumer demand than by the group leader.

c. Compliance

The principle of compliance in group communication within the community towards the group leader is stronger in driving the social activities of the members, compared to preferences in merchandise and government-provided programs.

In the future, when the implementation of the MSMEs and Eyek link and match program is projected, the program can be introduced by strengthening clear arguments to Eyek friends about the importance of the program. Then, a comparison can be made between Eyek friends who are willing to participate in the link and match program and those who are not. This comparison can be realized by appreciating Eyek friends who are willing to join the link and match program. If both of these points are strong, there is a high likelihood that the community members will form a sense of compliance to take part in the Eyek link and match chain with MSMEs.

*Effective communicator: Strengthening the personal and direct selling model*

Effective group communication can play a crucial role as communicators who support the program in this research. In order to communicate effectively, it makes sense for the communicator to have some background information [8]. Furthermore, effective communicators in Eyek group communication in Magelang Regency have several important components for strengthening personal and direct selling:

1. Building trust

Group communication can help build trust among all parties involved. MSMEs, Eyek vendors, and buyers must trust that this system will benefit them. Effective group communication can identify their concerns and questions and provide satisfying answers.

2. Consistent information delivery

It is essential to ensure that the information conveyed by the Group Leader as the communicator regarding the program is consistently delivered to all group members. This is crucial for consistent understanding so that the program and application model run optimally and are maximized in their development.

### 3. Understanding needs and challenges

As effective communicators, the function of group communication can help in optimally understanding the needs and challenges faced by each party, including the need for MSMEs to increase sales, the need for Eyek vendors to distribute products efficiently, and the need for buyers to have a convenient purchasing experience.

### 4. Increasing engagement

The function of an effective communicator is to increase the engagement and participation of all parties in the program. MSMEs will be more active in recording their sales, Eyek vendors will be more efficient in distribution, and buyers will be more motivated to use this application.

### 5. Building community bonds

The role of an effective communicator within the group can help build stronger community bonds. This can enhance loyalty among all parties.

### 6. Problem resolution

When issues arise, the function of an effective communicator can help identify, analyze, and resolve these problems. This ensures the program's continuity and minimizes disruptions in sales tracking.

To strengthen personal and direct selling program, effective group communication is key to creating a strong bond between MSMEs, Eyek vendors, and buyers. The function of an effective communicator in this context can embrace all parties to collaborate better, improve efficiency, and create a better experience for everyone involved.

## Conclusion

The Eyek community in the Magelang region plays a crucial role in the sustainability of trading activities and the effectiveness of group communication. This is evident in the process of sharing information among group members in locations where they obtain affordable and quality merchandise. Within the group, Eyek community members find it easier to share experiences and seek solutions to the problems they face. This group serves social, educational, persuasive, and problems-solving functions in society.

There are rules and norms that bind group members, forming a strong group commitment. The importance of effective group communication is also key to strengthening the personal and direct selling model in this program, helping build trust, providing consistent information, understanding needs and challenges, increasing engagement, fostering community bonds, and resolving issues. Therefore, effective group communication is at the core of efforts to create strong bonds between MSMEs, Eyek vendors, and buyers and enhance the experience for all parties involved.



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