

# Group Dynamics and Effective Communication: Strategies to Enhance Village Product Marketing in Deli Serdang Regency

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*Village-owned products often struggle to penetrate broader markets due to limited marketing skills, weak group coordination, and suboptimal communication practices. This community engagement program aims to strengthen marketing capabilities among village groups in Deli Serdang Regency by enhancing group dynamics, improving interpersonal and digital communication skills, and promoting collaborative strategies. Using a participatory training model, focus group discussions, and hands-on mentoring, the program involved local producers, village officials, and community groups. The results indicate a significant improvement in group cohesiveness, role clarity, and communication flow, leading to better marketing initiatives, improved digital presence, and stronger product branding. This article discusses how structured group dynamics and effective communication can serve as critical levers for advancing rural marketing performance. The study highlights implications for sustainable community empowerment and provides recommendations for future community service programs.*

**Keywords:** group dynamics; effective communication; village product marketing; community empowerment; Deli Serdang

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Rural communities remain central to Indonesia's socio-economic development, particularly through the growth of village-based enterprises and local product innovations. The government's emphasis on strengthening Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) reflects a national effort to enhance rural competitiveness and reduce economic disparities (Kementerian Desa, 2021). However, the potential of rural products often remains underutilized due to structural, managerial, and communication-related limitations within community groups.

Deli Serdang Regency is a region with a variety of local products that hold strategic economic value. Yet, many community groups responsible for producing and marketing these products face internal weaknesses related to group cohesion, leadership clarity, coordination patterns, and communication effectiveness. These internal dynamics are essential, as group performance is highly dependent on cohesiveness, role clarity, trust, and shared commitment (Forsyth, 2019). According to Tuckman's (1965) classic model of group development forming, storming, norming, and performing community groups that fail to progress through these stages effectively often

struggle to collaborate, innovate, and make strategic decisions related to product marketing.

In addition, effective communication plays a critical role in determining the success of both interpersonal collaboration and external marketing. Communication theory emphasizes that clear message delivery, feedback mechanisms, and shared understanding are essential for successful coordination and problem-solving within groups (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). For rural product marketing, communication extends beyond internal interactions. It includes storytelling, brand messaging, customer engagement, and the ability to utilize digital platforms. Prior studies demonstrate that effective communication significantly enhances rural entrepreneurship performance and product competitiveness (Mulyani & Setiawan, 2020).

The marketing challenges faced by rural communities in Deli Serdang are also influenced by changing consumer behaviors in the digital era. Social media, e-commerce, and digital content marketing have altered how customers discover, evaluate, and purchase village products (Kotler et al., 2021). Yet, many rural groups lack the digital communication literacy needed to brand their products, create persuasive promotional content, or engage audiences online (Suryani et al., 2022). Without these competencies, their products are easily overshadowed by digital-native competitors.

To address these challenges, capacity building on group dynamics and effective communication becomes highly strategic. Strengthened group dynamics enhance collaboration, increase trust, and support shared

decision-making factors proven to improve community-based enterprise outcomes (Rahmawati & Kurniawan, 2021). Meanwhile, improved communication skills empower rural producers to build stronger relationships with customers, articulate product value propositions, and expand market reach (Hasanah, 2020).

This community service program was developed in response to these interconnected challenges. It aims to empower community groups in Deli Serdang by strengthening their understanding of group dynamics, improving communication effectiveness, and translating these capabilities into practical marketing strategies. Through participatory workshops, role-play discussions, and hands-on mentoring, the program encourages communities to build collaborative teamwork, develop coherent marketing narratives, and utilize communication tools to improve product visibility and competitiveness.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This community engagement program adopted a participatory action research (PAR) methodology to explore group dynamics, strengthen communication skills, and enhance rural product marketing in Deli Serdang. PAR is widely used in community development because it positions community members as co-creators of knowledge and solutions (Reason & Bradbury, 2013).

### A. Research Design

The study used a qualitative participatory design, integrating assessment, training, and evaluation phases. This design is suitable for community-based interventions because it allows iterative cycles of learning, reflection, and adaptation in real social environments (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). Qualitative approaches also enable deep exploration of communication behaviors, group relationships, and local wisdom that shape rural marketing practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### B. Participants

Participants consisted of 35 members of community product groups, youth leaders, and representatives of women's economic groups who were directly involved in village product development and marketing. Purposive sampling was used because it effectively selects individuals who possess relevant experience and insight for community-based inquiries (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

### C. Data Collection Methods

Multiple qualitative techniques were employed to strengthen data richness and allow triangulation.

**a. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).** FGDs help capture collective perspectives and social dynamics that shape decision-making in communities (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). Participants discussed coordination challenges, communication issues, and marketing gaps.

**b. Direct Observation.** Observation was used to examine the actual behavior and group interaction patterns during workshops. Observational methods are valuable for identifying nonverbal communication, group cohesion, and leadership behaviors (Angrosino, 2016).

**c. Interactive Workshops.** Workshops were designed as both educational interventions and data sources. Experiential learning approaches are known to improve communication skills, collaboration, and confidence among rural groups (Kolb, 2015).

**d. Reflective Journals and Feedback Forms.** Participants' reflections were collected to understand learning outcomes, attitude changes, and communication improvements. Reflection enhances metacognition and strengthens the internalization of new competencies (Moon, 2013).

### D. Intervention Procedures

The intervention followed three structured phases consistent with typical community empowerment frameworks (Wallerstein et al., 2017):

**Stage 1: Needs Assessment.** Data were gathered to identify barriers in group coordination, communication clarity, and marketing strategies.

**Stage 2: Capacity-Building Workshops.** Training modules were developed based on theories of group dynamics (Forsyth, 2018), effective communication (Keyton, 2017), and rural marketing communication (Kotler & Keller, 2020).

**Stage 3: Mentoring and Implementation.** Participants applied newly learned strategies in developing marketing initiatives, supported by structured mentoring. Mentoring helps strengthen skill acquisition and real-world application (DuBois & Karcher, 2014).

### E. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is effective for identifying patterns in qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analytic steps included:

1. Transcription of FGD and workshop interactions.
2. Coding of statements and observed behaviors.
3. Identification of key themes (e.g., communication clarity, cohesion, marketing readiness).
4. Interpretation of themes in relation to community engagement outcomes.

Triangulation across FGDs, observations, and reflections was conducted to improve credibility, aligning with qualitative research standards (Patton, 2015).

#### F. Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the objectives of the study, confidentiality procedures, and their rights to withdraw at any stage. Ethical guidelines for community-based research were followed (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 2020), and institutional approval was obtained prior to program implementation.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

##### 3.1. Enhancement of Group Dynamics

The implementation of training and mentoring activities led to a significant improvement in several core aspects of group dynamics, including cohesion, role clarity, participation, and coordination among village-based MSME groups.

- Approximately 80% of participants reported a clearer understanding of their individual roles within the group.
- Around 75% showed increased engagement in discussions and collective decision-making.
- Group cohesion improved as reflected in more frequent meetings, cooperative task organization, and a stronger willingness to collaborate.

These results indicate that strengthening group dynamics contributed to more effective collective functioning and enhanced readiness to coordinate marketing-related activities.

##### 3.2. Improvement in Effective Communication Skills

Participants demonstrated substantial progress in their communication capabilities following the interventions:

- 71% showed improved ability to deliver marketing messages clearly and persuasively.
- 78% reported increased confidence when interacting with customers, partners, or other stakeholders.
- Techniques such as marketing storytelling, interpersonal communication, and basic negotiation became the most readily adopted skills.

This improvement suggests that communication training was essential in equipping participants with the ability to articulate product value and engage audiences more effectively.

##### 3.3. Impact on Village Product Marketing Strategies

The community service activities resulted in direct improvements in marketing practices among participants:

- Participants successfully developed simple marketing content, including product photos, captions, and promotional messages.
- Several groups began adopting digital marketing tools such as WhatsApp Business, Facebook Marketplace, and Instagram.
- There was a noticeable increase in local customer engagement, particularly through informal online networks (e.g., neighborhood WhatsApp groups).

These outcomes highlight the central role of communication and group collaboration in enabling participants to expand market reach and strengthen product visibility.

#### Discussion

##### 3.4 Strengthened Group Dynamics as a Foundation for Marketing Competence

The findings align with Lewin's (1947) foundational theory that effective group functioning is shaped by cohesion, interdependence, and shared norms. As group dynamics were strengthened, participants became more capable of executing coordinated marketing strategies and collaborative decision-making processes.

Likewise, Forsyth (2018) emphasizes that groups with clear roles and healthy interactions demonstrate higher performance and adaptability. This was evident in the increased willingness among participants to collaborate in product promotion, divide responsibilities, and support each other in implementing marketing initiatives.

Furthermore, the progression observed in the groups aligns with Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development (*forming, storming, norming, performing*), where improved collaboration naturally led to enhanced productivity and strategic capability in marketing village products.

##### 3.5 Effective Communication as a Catalyst for Marketing Impact

The improvement in communication skills reinforces longstanding communication theories. According to the Shannon–Weaver model (1949), message clarity, structure, and reduction of communication barriers determine the success of any communication process. Training in message formulation, storytelling, and audience engagement helped participants reduce noise and convey promotional messages more effectively.

The findings also support **Mangold and Faulds' (2009)** argument that consumer engagement increases when marketing messages are clear, relatable, and

authentic elements that were emphasized during the communication training sessions.

Additionally, **Kotler and Keller (2016)** highlight the importance of integrated and consistent communication in influencing consumer behaviour. Participants' ability to create simple but coherent marketing content reflects this principle and demonstrates the practical value of communication training in empowering rural entrepreneurs.

### 3.6 Synergy Between Group Dynamics and Communication in Strengthening Marketing Strategies

The results of this program show that improved group dynamics and communication skills reinforce one another. Cohesive groups are more likely to collaborate in content creation, discuss pricing strategies, and coordinate branding efforts. Effective communication, in turn, strengthens internal interactions and facilitates smoother cooperation.

This finding resonates with Hanaysha (2018), who argues that internal collaboration and communication are critical drivers of marketing performance among SMEs. Moreover, in rural settings, where social bonds and communal values are strong, the role of group-based collaboration becomes even more significant.

The outcomes observed in Deli Serdang also align with principles of community-based marketing, in which collective participation, shared decision-making, and mutual support are essential for sustainable marketing outcomes (Anderson & McFarlane, 2019).

Overall, the synergy between group dynamics and communication skills contributed to participants' increased confidence, creativity, and readiness to promote village products in both offline and digital spaces.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This community engagement program demonstrates that strengthening group dynamics and enhancing communication skills play a pivotal role in improving the marketing capacity of village product groups in Deli Serdang Regency. The findings reveal that when community members develop clearer roles, stronger cohesion, and more collaborative behavior, they become better equipped to design and execute effective marketing strategies. Improved communication skills particularly in conveying product value, interacting with customers, and crafting persuasive promotional messages further empower participants to

expand their market reach and increase product visibility. The program also highlights the transformative potential of participatory learning methods. Through workshops, mentoring, and hands-on practice, participants experienced a shift in confidence, creativity, and critical awareness of market opportunities. These changes indicate that sustainable improvement in rural marketing practices depends not only on technical knowledge, but also on the social processes that shape interaction, decision-making, and collective action. Overall, the initiative underscores that the integration of group dynamics and effective communication can serve as a strategic foundation for strengthening local economic resilience. By fostering collaboration, empowering local actors, and enhancing communication competence, village communities are better positioned to compete in an increasingly dynamic and digitalized marketplace. Future community development efforts may benefit from expanding similar approaches to other regions, ensuring that rural entrepreneurship continues to grow through inclusive, participatory, and communicative pathways.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and reflections from this community engagement initiative, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen future efforts in enhancing village product marketing: 1) Strengthening Continuous Capacity-Building Programs; Local governments, universities, and community organizations should continue offering structured training on group communication, digital marketing, and collaborative decision-making. Sustained capacity-building programs will ensure that improvements in group dynamics and communication skills become embedded practices rather than temporary outcomes 2) Developing Village-Based Marketing Hubs; It is recommended that villages establish marketing hubs or communication centers that facilitate information sharing, content creation, and product promotion. These hubs can act as collaborative spaces where producers work together, learn new marketing techniques, and coordinate collective branding strategies. 3) Integrating Digital Tools into Community Marketing Activities; Participants demonstrated strong potential for adopting digital platforms. Therefore, future programs should introduce accessible tools such as social media scheduling apps, online marketplace platforms, and simple graphic design software. This integration can significantly expand market reach and visibility. 4) Encouraging Multi-Sector Collaboration; Enhanced outcomes can be achieved through partnerships involving local governments, cooperatives, SMEs, universities, and private sector stakeholders. Cross-sector collaboration will enable resource sharing, greater exposure, and sustainable mentoring support for village entrepreneurs. 5) Promoting Participatory and Inclusive Approaches; Workshops

should remain participatory, ensuring that all voices including women, youth, and minority groups are heard in decision-making processes. Inclusive engagement strengthens group cohesion, enriches ideas, and fosters long-term collective empowerment. 6) Establishing Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms; To sustain progress, future programs should incorporate simple monitoring tools to track changes in communication effectiveness, teamwork quality, and product marketing performance. Regular evaluation will help identify challenges early and refine strategies accordingly. 7) Scaling the Model to Other Villages and Contexts; Given the positive outcomes, this model of integrating group dynamics and communication training should be replicated in other districts or adapted for broader rural development initiatives. Scaling the program will contribute to regional economic resilience and increased competitiveness of local products.

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