

Persuasive Communication Strategy in Facebook Buy and Sell Groups: A Case Study of Sari Octavia Qi's Mobile Phone Promotion in the Sungai Are Sindang Danau Pulau Beringin Forum

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Abstract

This research explores the persuasive communication strategy employed by Facebook user Sari Octavia Qi in promoting mobile phones through the Facebook group “Jual Beli Sungai Are Sindang Danau Pulau Beringin”. The study aims to analyze how persuasive techniques influence consumer behavior, using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as a theoretical framework. ELM explains two primary routes of persuasion: the central route, which relies on logical reasoning and detailed information, and the peripheral route, which depends on external cues such as visuals, testimonials, and emotional appeal. This qualitative descriptive study uses observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to gather data. Results indicate that Sari Octavia effectively combines both routes. She utilizes the central route by clearly explaining product specifications such as RAM, battery capacity, and purchase terms, and by providing transparency about the product source and testing process. Meanwhile, the peripheral route is applied through visual cues like real customer testimonials, product photos, friendly emojis, and informal language that resonates with buyers in her local community. These strategies build trust and credibility, which significantly affect purchase decisions. The study concludes that dual-route persuasive communication can enhance online sales success in Facebook buy-and-sell forums, especially for small-scale sellers in rural areas.

Keywords

Selling, Facebook, Communication, Mobile Phones, Online Promotion

Introduction

Indonesia, with its vast population and rapidly increasing internet access, has emerged as one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic digital markets (Shiddiq, Billi, & Fathoni, 2023). The widespread use of smartphones, affordable mobile data packages, and the high penetration of social media platforms have transformed how Indonesians interact, access information, and conduct economic activities in both urban and rural settings (Mulyana, 2004; Panuju, 2018). Among these platforms, Facebook has established itself not only as a social networking tool but also as a vital space for digital entrepreneurship—particularly for micro-businesses that operate outside the formal e-commerce ecosystem (Helianthusonfri, 2019; Simatupang, Efendi, & Putri, 2021).

One of the most utilized features on Facebook for commerce is the Buy and Sell Group, locally known as Forum Jual Beli. These groups serve as informal digital marketplaces where members of the community can freely advertise products, negotiate prices, and complete peer-to-peer transactions. Unlike official Facebook Pages or large-scale e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia and Shopee, buy and sell groups emphasize trust-based, hyperlocal interaction and social familiarity (Meta, 2023). These groups are especially popular in rural and semi-urban areas, where access to physical stores or formal digital marketplaces is limited, and where community ties still play a central role in shaping consumer decisions (Muwafik et al., 2020).

This study focuses on a specific Facebook group: “Jual Beli Sungai Are Sindang Danau Pulau Beringin”, which functions as a localized digital marketplace for residents in Sungai Are, a subdistrict in South Sumatra, and nearby villages. Within this group, a user named Sari Octavia Qi has garnered attention for her active engagement in promoting and selling mobile phones. Her posts are not only consistent but also frequently generate high interaction through likes, comments, and buyer feedback. Based on preliminary observations, these interactions often lead to successful transactions, suggesting that her communication strategies are effective in building trust and motivating purchase decisions. This raises important questions regarding the persuasive elements used in her communication and how such strategies function within grassroots-level digital marketplaces.

To examine these dynamics, the study adopts the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo, which outlines two main routes to persuasion: the central route and the peripheral route (Griffin, 2012; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). The central route involves deliberate cognitive processing, where consumers evaluate the logic, arguments, and content of the message before making a decision. In contrast, the peripheral route relies on less critical judgment, where consumers are influenced by surface-level cues such as aesthetics, emotional tones, social proof, or the communicator's credibility. By applying this model, the study aims to analyze the communication approach adopted by Sari Octavia Qi in her Facebook promotions—specifically, how she crafts persuasive messages, adapts her tone, and balances rational and emotional appeal depending on the target audience.

Understanding persuasive strategies in informal digital marketplaces is essential not only for academic purposes but also for practical implications, particularly for small business practitioners in underserved regions. In rural settings, digital trust and perceived authenticity often serve as substitutes for formal business legitimacy (Moleong, 2016). This study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing and social media communication by examining how grassroots sellers like Sari Octavia navigate persuasive tactics in resource-constrained, trust-driven environments. Moreover, it offers empirical insight into how localized marketing strategies

can effectively engage diverse buyer profiles—ranging from critical thinkers to emotionally driven consumers—within the ecosystem of community-based Facebook commerce.

Methods

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at exploring persuasive communication strategies used by a Facebook user, Sari Octavia Qi, in promoting mobile phones within a localized online marketplace. The qualitative method is considered appropriate as it allows the researcher to deeply understand human behavior and interaction within a natural social setting, especially in the context of digital communication practices on social media. The object of the research is the Facebook group “Jual Beli Sungai Are Sindang Danau Pulau Beringin,” which functions as a community-based buy-and-sell forum. The focus is specifically on one seller, whose promotional activities and engagement have drawn notable attention within the group.

The primary informant in this study is Sari Octavia Qi herself, who was selected through purposive sampling due to her consistent activity and visibility as a mobile phone seller in the group. In addition, three supporting informants were involved: Murti, Robi, and Ria—buyers who have made more than one transaction with the seller. These individuals were chosen based on their experience, relevance to the topic, and willingness to participate in the study.

To collect data, the researcher employed three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out by monitoring the seller’s Facebook posts, comments, and responses in the group over a defined period. In-depth interviews were conducted with both the seller and the buyers, using a semi-structured format to allow flexibility in responses while maintaining focus on persuasive strategies and consumer reactions. Documentation included screenshots of promotional posts, interaction records, and group descriptions to support the findings.

The data collected were then analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, irrelevant or repetitive information was filtered out to focus on the core themes. In the data display stage, important findings were organized in narrative form, making it easier to identify patterns and linkages. Finally, the researcher drew conclusions based on both observation and participant input, while continuously validating these interpretations throughout the research process. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how persuasive communication operates in digital buy-and-sell communities, particularly in rural Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to explore the persuasive communication strategies employed by Facebook user Sari Octavia Qi in promoting mobile phones through the Facebook buy-and-sell group “Jual Beli Sungai Are Sindang Danau Pulau Beringin.” Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as the primary theoretical framework, the research sought to identify how both the central and peripheral routes of persuasion were utilized and how these approaches influenced

the behavior of potential buyers within a community-driven digital marketplace.

Application of Central Route in Persuasive Communication

The central route in ELM refers to a persuasion path where individuals engage in thoughtful consideration of the message content. In this study, the central route is evident in Sari Octavia's consistent efforts to provide detailed, logical, and honest information about the mobile phones she offers. Through observation and interviews, it was found that she regularly includes clear descriptions of technical specifications—such as RAM capacity, battery life, signal compatibility, and camera quality—when promoting her products.

During the interview, Sari emphasized that transparency is a core value in her selling process. She stated that she always informs buyers that the phones are ordered from e-commerce platforms like Shopee or Lazada and that she performs a quality check upon arrival. If the phone shows any defect during the initial unboxing, it is returned to the seller immediately. These actions are not just claims but are documented through testimonials and photos that she posts in the group. This level of openness builds consumer confidence, particularly among buyers who require rational justification before making a purchase decision.

Buyers who were interviewed confirmed that the detailed explanations and the willingness to be honest about the origin of the products significantly increased their trust. One buyer, for instance, reported that the decision to purchase was influenced by the seller's direct response to questions and her ability to clearly explain technical concepts in simple language. This illustrates that the central route, when delivered with clarity and integrity, can strongly impact rational consumers in informal digital markets.

Use of Peripheral Route for Enhancing Appeal

While the central route was dominant, Sari Octavia also effectively employed the peripheral route, which appeals to less-involved or less-critical consumers who are influenced by surface-level cues. In her Facebook posts, Sari frequently uses real photos of previously delivered products, along with short captions, emojis, and casual language that reflects the local dialect and culture. Phrases like "Shay, your order has arrived" or humorous tags were often included, creating a friendly and informal tone that resonates with the group's members.

These peripheral cues—especially visual testimonials—serve as powerful tools for influencing consumers who may not be motivated to deeply analyze product specifications. Several informants mentioned that they were persuaded to purchase not because of the technical details, but because they saw others in the community had already ordered and received phones successfully. In rural, community-based marketplaces, such social proof is often more compelling than technical arguments.

Moreover, Sari's use of her real identity, her own profile photo, and photos of her children as cover images contribute to an image of authenticity. Unlike anonymous sellers or marketplace bots, she presents herself as a real person, a mother, and a community member, which fosters a

sense of familiarity and trustworthiness. This identity strategy, though subtle, aligns with the peripheral route by appealing to the emotional comfort of the buyer.

Blending Central and Peripheral Strategies: A Hybrid Approach

The most significant finding from this study is the seller's ability to blend both persuasive routes strategically. For example, when engaging with buyers she already knows personally, she may use informal greetings and humor to build rapport, while still providing clear product details. For new or skeptical buyers, she is more likely to rely on testimonial photos and emphasize past customer satisfaction to establish credibility.

Such flexibility in communication indicates a deep understanding of audience segmentation—even if done intuitively rather than formally. Sari adapts her tone, message structure, and persuasive route depending on the characteristics of the buyer: whether they are familiar with online shopping, cautious and analytical, or spontaneous and emotionally driven.

This hybrid approach appears to be particularly effective in the context of local rural marketplaces, where digital literacy varies widely. Some buyers may require assurance through logic and technicality, while others are influenced by community behavior and emotional cues. By catering to both types, Sari maximizes her persuasive impact.

Trust Building and Consumer Loyalty

Another important theme that emerged is the role of **trust** in sustaining long-term buyer-seller relationships. Sari does not ask for down payments (DP) upfront, but instead confirms the buyer's commitment and delivers the phone personally or through local arrangements. This trust-based transaction model reflects the cultural values of the community, where verbal agreements and familiarity still play a significant role.

In addition, Sari's responses to doubts or hesitations from buyers are tactful and empathetic. She often reassures them by citing examples of previous satisfied buyers, sometimes mentioning their names if they are mutual acquaintances. This reinforces the perception that the seller is reliable and embedded within the community, a powerful factor in repeated transactions.

Implications and Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this study supports the applicability of the Elaboration Likelihood Model in digital peer-to-peer commerce. It also demonstrates that in real-world scenarios, especially in non-formal and community-based environments, persuasion rarely operates in a binary mode. Instead, sellers often use a combination of central and peripheral cues, adjusted in real-time based on buyer responses, social context, and prior interactions.

Practically, the findings suggest that small-scale digital entrepreneurs—particularly in rural or semi-rural areas—can greatly benefit from mastering both the informational and emotional aspects of persuasive communication. By fostering honesty, using local language, leveraging testimonials, and presenting a personal identity, sellers can create meaningful consumer

engagement without relying on expensive advertising or high-end visuals.

Conclusion

This study concludes that persuasive communication plays a vital role in the success of online selling activities within community-based Facebook groups, particularly in rural areas where interpersonal trust and localized engagement remain central to transaction processes. The case of Sari Octavia Qi, an active seller in the Jual Beli Sungai Are Sindang Danau Pulau Beringin Facebook group, illustrates how a strategic blend of both central and peripheral routes of persuasion can significantly influence consumer behavior and decision-making.

Through the central route, Sari Octavia delivers detailed and transparent product information, including technical specifications, pricing, delivery procedures, and return policies. This approach appeals to buyers who seek rational and logical justification before making a purchase. Her honest communication, coupled with willingness to explain product details clearly, fosters a high level of credibility among more analytical consumers.

Simultaneously, the peripheral route is utilized through the use of real-life customer testimonials, casual and emotionally resonant language, emojis, and personalized greetings. These elements enhance the emotional connection with potential buyers and build familiarity and trust, especially for users who rely on visual and social cues rather than cognitive elaboration. The use of her real identity and consistent presence in the group further strengthens this bond.

Overall, the study demonstrates that combining both persuasive strategies—informational and emotional—allows sellers to address a diverse range of consumer motivations. The adaptability shown by Sari Octavia reflects not only communication competence but also a deep understanding of her target market. Her success offers valuable insights for other local entrepreneurs who rely on digital platforms like Facebook to grow their businesses without formal training or large-scale marketing budgets.

In conclusion, effective persuasive communication in online selling is not about choosing between logic and emotion, but about knowing when and how to use both, depending on the audience, context, and platform dynamics. This dual-route strategy is especially effective in informal marketplaces, where trust, relatability, and responsiveness are more influential than conventional advertising.

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