

B2B Marketing Communication Strategies In Increasing Sales : A Systematic Literature Review

Jupensius Rudi¹, Dimas Hamdan Mubarak², Hasna Hamida Alifia Ar-Rasyi³, Wening Patmi Rahayu⁴, Titis Shinta Dewi⁵

Faculty of Economics and Bussiness, Universitas Negeri Malang

Email : jupensius.rudi.2304138@students.um.ac.id¹,

dimas.hamdan.2304138@students.um.ac.id², hasna.hamida.2304138@students.um.ac.id ,

wening.patmi.fe@um.ac.id⁴, titis.shinta.fe@um.ac.id⁵

ABSTRACT

This research is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) that adopts PRISMA (Preferred Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis) to investigate business-to-business (B2B) marketing communication strategies in increasing sales. Data were obtained from Scopus, Emerald, Wiley, Taylor and Francis. A total of 96 journals were initially identified, but through the application of strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, the number was reduced to 10 journals that served as the focus of the comprehensive review. The results show that B2B marketing through social media is becoming an integral and connected part of organisations, as it not only helps during the sales process but also during the buying process. Social media has the potential to assist B2B organisations in improving their communication capabilities by facilitating knowledge promotion and encouraging engagement through advanced technology.

Keywords:

B2B; Marketing Communication; Sales, SLR

INTRODUCTION

Social media has developed into an important element in modern society due to its pervasive influence on communication, information dissemination, and social interaction (Opote, 2017; Felix et al., 2017). According to statistical data published by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2023, the number of internet users reached 215 million and increased by 1.17% from 2022 with a penetration rate of 78.19%. The large penetration shows that the potential of marketing channels through the internet is large. Its widespread use and impact has changed the way individuals, businesses, and even governments engage with each other, shaping societal norms and behaviours. While significant utilisation of social media platforms has been made in the business-to-consumer (B2C) domain, there is still a dearth of research relating to their application in business-to-business (B2B) settings (Iankova et al., 2019). This proves that there is a gap and a need for further exploration and analysis to fully understand the implications and opportunities presented by social media in the B2B context.

Studies conducted by (Cartwright et al., 2021; Drummond, 2018) indicate that a large amount of unexamined potential exists in leveraging the use of social media in the B2B marketing domain, presenting opportunities to achieve competitive advantage by improving the efficiency of organisational processes, harnessing individual knowledge and skills and effectively policing rapid innovations in the marketplace. In other words, social media has the potential to assist organisations in improving communication capabilities by facilitating the promotion of employee knowledge and encouraging engagement through advanced technology. Research conducted by Nunan et al. (2018) shows that in the B2C domain, companies effectively utilise social media brand pages for direct consumer engagement and long-term relationship development, which results in increased sales and improved brand awareness. On the

other hand, research on the strategic utilisation of social media in the B2B sector is scarce and less comprehensive (Salo, 2017). Although there are some studies related to B2B marketing communication strategies in increasing sales volume, the main focus is only on the large company sector. In increasing sales, especially in the realm of B2B business, the role of marketing communication strategies is very important. Services to companies and product offerings are the focus of B2B business, therefore in this context the success of brand awareness, networking and sales volume requires a good marketing communication strategy.

The main obstacle faced by B2B companies in relation to social media is the lack of understanding how to efficiently combine available platforms as strategic instruments and how to optimally integrate these instruments into a comprehensive marketing approach (Chirumalla et al., 2018). As a result, more research on strategic social media—which derives from both academic and practical observations is being conducted in response to the significance of social media. This tries to investigate more strategic social media and is in line with the results of previous research (Salo, 2017).

In a study conducted by Salo (2017), seven main themes were examined with the main focus in the existing literature centred on “buyer-seller relationships and business networks” indicating a strategic perspective. The articles in this systematic literature review are all focused on examining social media's strategic use in business-to-business (B2B) interactions. Therefore, in view of the most recent advancements in the field of marketing, our objective is to offer a contemporary evaluation that delves into the strategic implementation of these sorts of platforms.

Given the uncoordinated and disorganised nature of the studies that have been conducted on B2B social media, the aim of this systematic literature review is to combine the current literature to build a unified understanding of social media strategy in B2B. This effort will provide practical strategic recommendations and illustrate potential avenues for future research (Ogilvie et al., 2018; Pascucci et al., 2018). In addition, the clustering of the topics will provide the top research priorities in B2B social media. With this contextual backdrop considered, the aims of the present review encompass the following: elucidating the strategic utilization of social media in B2B marketing to enhance comprehension, scrutinizing existing knowledge deficiencies, and suggesting potential research avenues as signified in the contemporary literature.

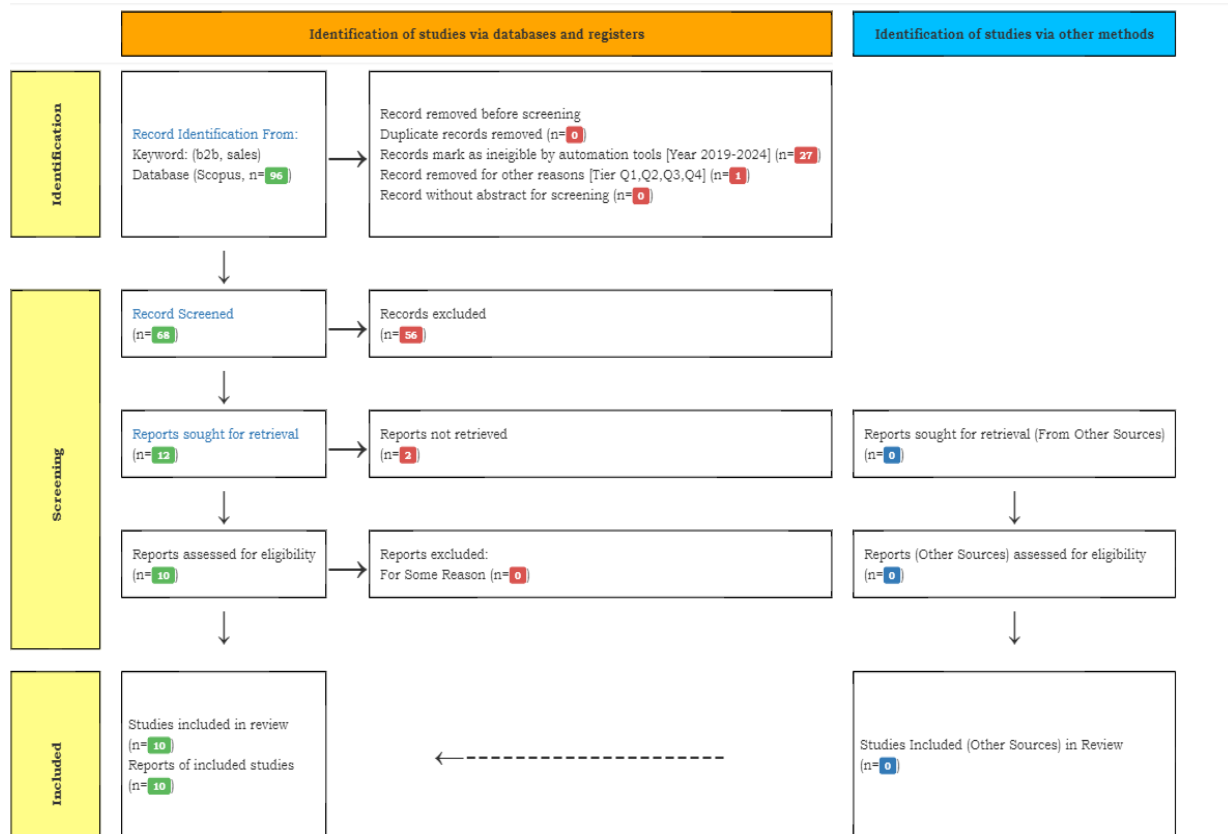
METHOD

This research adopts the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology to analyze relevant articles sourced from various databases such as Scopus, Emerald, Wiley, and Taylor & Francis using the search keywords "B2B" and "sales," resulting in a total of 96 pertinent articles. PRISMA methodology was chosen due to its ability to provide a systematic and structured framework for synthesizing existing literature on this topic. According to Bae and Lee (2020), this method allows researchers to carefully select articles that meet predefined inclusion criteria, thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the analysis. Additionally, PRISMA helps minimize bias in the article selection process, leading to more accurate and comprehensive synthesis (Liberati et al., 2009).

By employing this approach, this study aims to present a comprehensive overview of the latest developments in the B2B and sales domain. According to Huang et al. (2021), through systematic analysis and meta-analysis, such research can help

identify trends, patterns, and relationships among variables that may be challenging to discern individually across scattered articles. This can provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing B2B sales performance and effective strategies in navigating evolving market challenges. Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to practitioners and researchers in expanding their insights into the dynamic landscape of B2B and sales.

MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES



Generate From Watase Uake Tools, based on Prisma 2020 Reporting

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I Article analysis

Number	Writer	Title	Citation	Publisher
1	Rocio Rodriguez, Mornay Roberts-Lombard and Nils M. Hogevoid and Göran Svensson (2022)	Organisational and environmental indicators of B2B sellers' sales performance in services firms	7	European Business Review
2	Enping (Shirley) Mai and Ying Liao (2022)	The interplay of word-of-mouth and customer value on B2B sales performance in a digital platform: an expectancy value theory perspective	15	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing
3	Raj Agnihotri and Babu John-Mariadoss (2022)	Social media and B2B sales: An integrative framework and future directions	9	Industrial Marketing Management

Number	Writer	Title	Citation	Publisher
4	Melanie Bowen, Christine Lai-Bennejean, Alexander Haas and, Deva Rangarajan (2021)	Social media in B2B sales: Why and when does salesperson social media usage affect salesperson performance?	32	Industrial Marketing Management
5	Jonna Koponena, Saara Julkunena, and Akiko Asai (2019)	Sales communication competence in international B2B solution selling	60	Industrial Marketing Management
6	Sara Fraccastoro, Mika Gabrielsson, and Ellen Bolman Pullins (2021)	The integrated use of social media, digital, and traditional communication tools in the B2B sales process of international SMEs	63	International Business Review
7	Graziela Perretto Rodrigues, Adriana Roseli Wunsch Takahashi and Paulo Henrique Muller Henrique Prado 2021	The use of social media in the B2B sales process: a meta synthesis	4	RAUSP Management Journa
8	Nils M. Hogevoel, Rocio Rodriguez and Goran Svensson (2022)	Organisational and environmental indicators of B2B sales performance	10	Marketing Intelligence & Planning
9	Iqbal Thonse Hawaldar, Mithun S. Ullal, Adel Sarea, Rajesha T. Mathukutti and Nympha Joseph (2022)	The Study on Digital Marketing Influences on Sales for B2B Start-Ups in South Asia	11	Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity
10	Chris I. Enyinda, Abdullah Promise Oput, Akinola Fadahunsi and Chris H. Mbah (2020)	Marketing-sales-service interface and social media marketing influence on B2B sales process	28	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing

First, a journal written by Rodriguez et al (2022) with a citation count of 7. The journal discusses the effective management of the seller-customer relationship within service companies operating in the B2B environment. It proposes a comprehensive six-dimensional framework encompassing organizational and environmental indicators, including the external environment (randomness), internal environment (teamwork, market orientation), supervisory leadership (positive output), feedback mechanisms, positive behavioral feedback, and transformational leadership. The increasing necessity for service companies to engage with B2B sellers underscores the importance of proactively adapting to market dynamics through a collaborative co-creation approach aimed at cultivating enduring seller-buyer partnerships.

Second, a journal written by Mai and Liao (2022) with a citation count of 15. It is explicated that within B2B sales, the concept of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and customer value plays a crucial role in enhancing the ease of conducting business transactions. This, in turn, aids in shaping fleeting beliefs regarding the feasibility of implementation endeavors (such as hope, utility value, and achievement) and their perceived advantages in attaining the intended outcomes, thus leading to enhanced sales performance. Specifically, the emotional tone (valence) influences the quantity of quotations, whereas the magnitude of transactions exhibits a favorable impact on the number of completed deals. As the transaction volume increases, the level of uncertainty related to the product decreases among consumers.

Third, a journal written by Agnihotri & Mariadoss (2022) with 9 citations. In the realm of business-to-business (B2B) transactions, the incorporation of a robust social media presence is deemed essential and interlinked with the overall functioning of the organization. This integration proves beneficial not solely in the context of facilitating sales activities, but also in streamlining the purchasing process. By leveraging social media platforms, sales representatives are afforded the opportunity to establish connections with clientele, thereby cultivating social capital that fosters customer interaction and engagement with the sales team.

Fourth, a journal written by Bowen et al (2021) with 32 citations. In the realm of Business-to-Business (B2B) sales, it is crucial to afford salespeople the avenues through which they can engage in direct communication with clients, a practice that is facilitated by the proactive utilization of social media platforms. This strategic approach not only serves to cater to the needs of customers more efficiently but also holds significant sway in bolstering the overall efficacy and success of sales endeavors.

Fifth, a journal written by Koponen et al (2019) with 60 citations. There is a new conceptualisation of sales communication competence in international B2B salespeople consisting of behavioural communication components, affective communication components, cognitive communication components, and sales acumen. Sales expertise plays a vital role in the proficiency of sales communication. In the absence of a comprehensive grasp of sales strategies and managerial abilities, global B2B vendors will be unable to effectively engage in solution-oriented sales endeavors.

Sixth, a journal written by Fraccastoro et al (2021) with 63 citations. Social media has the potential to be highly beneficial in engaging with international potential clients. The utilization of digital communication instruments is most prevalent during the persuasion stage, whereas conventional communication methods continue to play a role in managing customer relationships. The effectiveness of digital sales communication tools is evident in the retention of various categories of international clientele.

Seventh, a journal written by Rodrigues et al (2021) with a citation count of 4. In this journal, it is delineated that the utilization of social media ought to be conducted by the sales and marketing sectors that derive advantages from this amalgamation. The employment of social media (content marketing, online media) during the phases of the sales procedure yields advantages for the enterprise such as enhanced relationships with customers, sales assistance, elevated corporate reputation, and brand enhancement. The deployment of social media impacts the sales procedure, acting as a mediator amidst the phases of the sales process and the ensuing advantages for the enterprise.

Eighth, a journal written by Hogevoold et al (2022) with a citation count of 10. Dimensions of sales performance in B2B sellers encompass various organisational and environmental indicators, such as the external environment, internal environment pertaining to teamwork, internal environment related to market orientation, supervisory leadership involving positive output feedback, supervisory leadership encompassing positive behavioural feedback, and supervisory leadership focusing on transformational leadership.

Ninth, the journal written by Hawaldar et al (2022) with a citation count of 11. Sales are significantly impacted by digital media and outbound marketing initiatives, particularly the phenomenon of word-of-mouth, which plays a pivotal role in shaping

brand perception as it disseminates through various social media channels. The efficacy of digital marketing tactics and consumer engagements exhibits distinct levels of impact in the different countries of South Asia, underscoring the imperative need to formulate novel digital marketing strategies tailored for business-to-business transactions.

Tenth, a journal written by Enyinda et al (2020) with 28 citations. In the pursuit of being customer-centric and enhancing organizational efficacy, customer comprehension stands out as the paramount attribute within the sales process. Following closely is the significance of need identification, with customer approach being deemed least crucial. Leveraging Social Media Marketing (SMM) enables managers to enhance the accuracy of predicting customers' purchasing behaviors, consequently facilitating effective management and enhancement of sales performance. Business-to-Business (B2B) enterprises with a marketing orientation can leverage the mutual reliance through information exchange and engagement inherent in utilizing SMM.

Discussion

The synthesis of the provided journals underscores that B2B sales management encompasses not only technical aspects like marketing strategies and communication tactics but also delves into deep customer relationship management. Rodriguez et al. (2022) emphasize the necessity of fostering enduring seller-buyer partnerships through proactive, collaborative approaches, while Mai and Liao (2022) highlight the influence of psychological and emotional factors, such as expectations and utility values, in enhancing B2B sales performance. These findings underscore the importance of understanding customer needs and perceptions to optimize business transactions.

Moreover, the analysis also accentuates the significance of adapting to technological advancements and market trends in executing B2B sales practices. Agnihotri & Mariadoss (2022) indicate that a strong presence on social media is key to expediting sales and purchase processes, while Koponen et al. (2019) stress the importance of developing sales communication competencies in a global context. This indicates that success in B2B sales relies not only on the right strategies but also on the ability to quickly adapt to evolving markets and technological changes. Thus, practitioners and researchers need to focus not only on technical aspects of sales management but also on psychological aspects, customer relationships, and adaptation to market and technological developments.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of B2B, the integration of a robust social media presence into the organizational framework is crucial, serving not only as a facilitator during sales transactions but also proving invaluable in the procurement process. Social media platforms enable sales personnel to establish connections with clientele, fostering social capital that encourages customer interaction and engagement. Leveraging social media holds the potential to enhance organizational communication capabilities by promoting staff expertise and fostering engagement through cutting-edge technological tools. The incorporation of social media, encompassing content marketing and online media, at various stages of the sales cycle yields numerous advantages for businesses, including enhanced client relationships, sales assistance, bolstered corporate reputation, and brand development. The utilization of social media

plays a pivotal role in shaping the sales process, serving as a mediator between sales stages and the resulting organizational benefits. The integration of social media within B2B marketing strategies can serve as a powerful asset in accomplishing corporate objectives, particularly when adeptly combining digital and traditional communication channels to nurture lasting customer relationships.

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