Developing A Digital Marketing Strategy to Enhance Product Sales and Brand Awareness: A Case Study of Sentraloka Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges of Sentraloka Indonesia, a digital retail intermediary of MSME snack products, which is facing sales stagnation and weak brand awareness. Companies rely too heavily on short-term paid advertising, resulting in revenue volatility and a lack of organic demand. Fragmented digital communication limits the formation of a coherent brand identity. The research uses an integrated framework: Resource-Based View (RBV) and VRIO for internal analysis, Porter's Five Forces for external pressures, and SWOT and TOWS to generate strategic alternatives based on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in an omnichannel perspective. The main premise is that Sentraloka has valuable intangible resources—market reputation and relationships with MSME suppliers—that have the potential to generate Sustainable Competitive Advantage but are underutilized due to the weakness of the Organizational (O) dimension. The research design was a qualitative single case study with in-depth interviews of three internal stakeholders and ten external informants, analyzed using Braun and Clarke's reflective thematic analysis. The findings reveal that although Sentraloka's resources meet the criteria of Value, Scarcity, and partial Inadmissibility, the company falls short on the Organization dimension due to manual systems, inconsistent content, and the absence of a structured CRM. The proposed IMC strategy emphasizes three pillars: strengthening brand credibility, differentiating MSME storytelling, and CRM-based recurring engagement, implemented through a 12-month phased plan. Contributions include a managerial roadmap for the transition of MSMEs from promotion-based sales to sustainable growth, as well as a theoretical expansion of IMC's literature by demonstrating its role as a strategic organizational integrator to transform intangible resources into sustainable competitive advantages.

Keywords: Organizational capability, Integrated Marketing Communication, VRIO, Marketplace dependency, Digital strategy, MSMEs.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are fundamental pillars of Indonesia's economic resilience and inclusive growth. In 2023, Indonesia recorded around 66 million MSMEs, which reflects a steady expansion compared to the pre-pandemic period (Cahyani & Amna, 2022; Fahmi Haikal Maladzi & Firman Muhammad Abdurrohman Akbar, 2024). In addition to their contribution to the distribution of employment and income, MSMEs play a strategic role in sustaining domestic consumption, particularly in the food and beverage sector, which remains one of the most resilient and adaptive industries in Indonesia (Anugrah, 2020; Widowati & Purwanto, 2019).

Among food-related MSMEs, the packaged snack industry shows significant growth potential (Lansangan, 2022). Statista (2023) projects that Indonesia's snack market revenue will reach USD 4.54 billion (around IDR 74 trillion) by 2025, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.74% for the period 2025–2030. This growth is driven by changing consumption patterns, increasing urbanization, and the rapid expansion of digital commerce. However, alongside these opportunities, competition within the snack market has increased, especially in digital markets where barriers to entry are relatively low and price transparency is high.

In this increasingly digital competitive environment, MSMEs are required not only to participate in the online market but also to develop strategic capabilities in digital marketing, brand communication, and customer engagement (Budiarto et al., 2023; Nuvriasari et al., 2024; Probohudono et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025). Marketplace platforms

such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and Lazada provide MSMEs with direct access to a large consumer base, but also create a risk of structural dependency. Companies that rely too heavily on paid promotion and algorithm-based visibility often experience unstable sales performance, weak brand ownership, and limited customer loyalty beyond transactional interactions.

Sentraloka Indonesia, which was established in early 2024 in Bekasi, West Java, operates as a digital retail intermediary that curates and distributes locally produced snacks and packaged foods from MSME partners through major online marketplaces. The company positions itself not only as a reseller, but as a platform that supports local MSME producers by expanding its market reach through digital channels. Despite these strategic intentions, Sentraloka faces several interrelated challenges that hinder its long-term growth and competitiveness.

Internal sales data shows that Sentraloka's revenue performance shows volatility and a tendency to stagnate rather than consistent growth. Sales fluctuations are closely related to the activation of paid marketplace ads, suggesting that short-term promotional exposure serves as a key sales driver. Although ad spend remains relatively moderate, the structural reliance on paid promotion reflects the absence of a sustainable, brand-driven demand generation mechanism. When ad intensity decreases, overall sales performance deteriorates, indicating weak organic demand and limited customer retention.

In addition to sales instability, Sentraloka also experienced limited brand awareness outside the marketplace ecosystem. Digital communication efforts in the media owned—especially social media platforms—remain fragmented, irregular, and not sufficiently integrated with market activities (El-Astal & El-Youssef, 2025; Grewal et al., 2022; Juska, 2021; Strauss et al., 2025). As a result, consumer interactions are largely limited within third-party platforms, preventing companies from establishing direct and lasting relationships with their customers. Preliminary observations and further interview insights point to a mismatch between evolving consumer expectations—such as visual credibility, short-form video content, storytelling consistency, and trust signals—and Sentraloka's current marketing practices.

This condition reveals that Sentraloka's challenges are not only operational or promotional, but strategic. The core problem lies in the misalignment between the company's internal capabilities, external competitive pressures, and its digital marketing execution. While the existing literature emphasizes the importance of digital marketing for MSME performance, there is still a lack of context-specific frameworks that integrate internal resource analysis, industry dynamics, and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) principles into actionable strategies suitable for resource-constrained and market-dependent MSMEs.

Therefore, this study seeks to develop a systematic and evidence-based digital marketing strategy for Sentraloka Indonesia by integrating internal analysis (Resource-Based View and VRIO), external industry analysis (Porter's Five Forces), strategic synthesis (SWOT and TOWS), as well as IMC framework and implementation-oriented digital marketing. Through this approach, the research aims to address sales stagnation, increase brand awareness, and support a sustainable competitive position in Indonesia's increasingly competitive digital snack retail industry.

This study is formulated based on three main research questions. First, it aims to identify the internal and external factors affecting Sentraloka Indonesia's current business performance. Second, it seeks to explore how Sentraloka Indonesia can design and implement a digital marketing strategy that effectively increases product sales and brand awareness. Third, it

investigates what strategic priorities should be set to ensure sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness in the digital market. Aligned with these research questions, the study has three primary objectives. The first objective is to identify and analyze the internal and external factors influencing Sentraloka Indonesia's business performance. The second is to develop and evaluate a digital marketing strategy tailored to Sentraloka Indonesia's context and needs. The third is to formulate strategic priorities that support sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness for Sentraloka Indonesia in the digital marketplace.

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, in terms of scope, the analysis focuses exclusively on Sentraloka Indonesia as a single case study. While this provides in-depth insights, the findings may have limited generalizability to other MSMEs with different operational models. Second, regarding data sources, primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with Sentraloka's internal stakeholders (founders, marketing, and operational staff). Secondary data include company reports, market analytics, and relevant literature. The limited number of respondents may constrain the diversity of perspectives obtained. Third, in terms of analytical focus, the strategic analysis emphasizes the *Promotion* and *Place* components of the marketing mix, as these relate directly to digital marketing performance. The *Product* and *Price* dimensions are discussed only insofar as they support promotional and distribution strategies. Fourth, the contextual boundary of this study is the Indonesian packaged snack industry, with a focus on the digital marketplace environment (Shopee, Tokopedia, Lazada). The conclusions may not directly apply to MSMEs operating in offline or hybrid business models. Fifth, given Sentraloka's limited financial and human resources, strategy formulation prioritizes low-cost, high-impact digital marketing initiatives over large-scale, capital-intensive approaches.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
This study uses a qualitative case study design with Sentraloka Indonesia as the sole unit of analysis. The case study approach was chosen because the issues investigated—stagnant sales, weak brand awareness, and limited digital marketing capabilities—are embedded in the operational realities of companies and cannot be separated from the context of their organizations and markets. Yin (2018) emphasizes that case studies are well-suited to exploring contemporary phenomena whose boundaries with real-life settings are not clearly defined, especially when the research aims to understand strategic processes, resources, and behaviors in depth. In this study, the qualitative case study design supports the exploration of Sentraloka's internal characteristics, external competitive environment, and strategic responses in an interpretive, context-sensitive, and analytically rich manner.

The structure of the research design follows the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter II. The investigation begins with an internal analysis based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and VRIO frameworks to assess whether Sentraloka's resources and capabilities have organizational value, scarcity, imitability, and support. This stage is followed by an external analysis using Porter's Five Forces to evaluate the competitive pressures shaping Indonesia's digital snack market. Insights from internal and external analysis are synthesized through the SWOT framework and further elaborated into strategic alternatives using the TOWS matrix. The final stage of the analytical pathway translates these strategic options into viable strategic

recommendations through Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and digital marketing principles. This sequential structure ensures that the formulation of strategies is methodologically coherent, theoretically based, and in line with the empirical reality of Sentraloka Indonesia.

Data Collection Methods

Internal informants include the company's founder, who is responsible for the strategic direction and development of partnerships; member of the marketing and strategy functions, which manages and executes digital marketing activities; and operational staff involved in product curation, packaging, and logistics. These informants were selected for their direct involvement in the decision-making process, day-to-day operations, and implementation of marketing activities, putting them in a good position to explain the company's internal resources, organizational constraints, and strategic challenges.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, allowing for consistency between respondents while maintaining flexibility to explore emerging themes. The interview protocol is aligned with a conceptual framework and covers key thematic areas, including internal resources and capabilities, perception of external competitive pressures, SWOT-related assessments, and digital marketing and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) practices. All interviews are audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and equipped with field notes to enhance analytical accuracy and credibility.

Secondary data is collected to strengthen reliability and support triangulation of findings. The company's internal documents—including monthly revenue records, ad spend, product catalogs, and social media analytics—provide empirical evidence of business performance and marketing activities. External benchmarking data, such as marketplace indicators from Shopee and Tokopedia, competitor listings, and competitors' social media engagement metrics, are used to contextualize the dynamics of the competition. Broader industry insights are gained from Statista's market reports, BPS statistics, GoodStats publications, and relevant academic literature on MSMEs, digital marketing, and market ecosystems.

The selection of external informants follows clearly defined objective criteria: previous experience with the digital purchase of snack products, exposure to multiple digital touchpoints (such as market listings, visual content, ratings and reviews, and short video trading), and familiarity with online product evaluations based on credibility cues including visual presentation, message consistency, and peer validation. These criteria ensure that the informant is able to provide appropriate reflections that are directly relevant to the study's focus on BMI and omnichannel communication.

The number of external informants is determined based on the principle of data saturation. Data saturation is achieved when additional interviews no longer yield new conceptual insights, themes, or variations relevant to the research question (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Saunders et al., 2018). During the interview process, a recurring pattern emerges regarding the importance of visual credibility, short video exposure, rating-based trust, and cross-channel consistency in influencing digital purchase decisions. After about the eighth interview, the next data largely reinforces existing themes without introducing a new dimension substantively. Two additional interviews were conducted to confirm thematic stability, resulting in a total of ten external informants.

This approach is consistent with established qualitative research standards, which show that data saturation in a focused and relatively homogeneous sample often occurs in the range of 8-12 interviews (Guest et al., 2006). Therefore, the use of ten external informants reflects methodological rigor rather than arbitrary numerical selection. By combining purposive sampling with saturation-based termination criteria, the study ensures that the qualitative data collected are sufficiently analytical, theoretically based, and methodologically defensible, thereby strengthening the credibility and credibility of the research findings.

Data Analysis Methods

The study uses a systematic qualitative data analysis procedure based on thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows the identification, organization, and interpretation of repetitive patterns of meaning across qualitative data while remaining theoretically flexible and compatible with strategy-oriented analytical frameworks.

The analysis begins with the introduction phase, where the researcher repeatedly reads all the interview transcripts and relevant documents to gain an in-depth understanding of the data corpus. During this stage, initial impressions, initial reflections, and important statements regarding internal capabilities, external pressures, and marketing practices are recorded as analytical memos. This step ensures immersion in the data and sensitivity to contextual nuances embedded in the informant's narrative.

In the second phase, the initial coding is done through systematic line-by-line transcript checks. Code is assigned to meaningful data segments that capture relevant concepts such as operational strengths, capability limitations, competitive pressures, consumer perceptions, and communication practices. Coding is done openly and inductively, allowing patterns to emerge from the data rather than being forced a priori. At the same time, theoretical sensitization is applied by aligning the code with the key analytical domains derived from conceptual frameworks, including RBV, VRIO, Porter's Five Forces, SWOT, and IMC constructions.

The third phase involves theme search, where the associated code is grouped into broader categories that represent high-level patterns of meaning. For example, codes related to inventory instability, limited human resources, and inconsistent content production are grouped into temporary themes that reflect internal weaknesses, while codes related to consumer trust, rating sensitivity, and visual credibility are grouped under themes related to the effectiveness of digital communications. At this stage, a thematic map is developed to visualize the relationships between categories and to assess their relevance to the research objectives.

In the fourth stage, a review and improvement of the theme is carried out to ensure internal coherence and external differences between themes. Each candidate theme is evaluated against a complete dataset to verify whether it accurately represents a pattern of recurrence across informants and data sources. Themes that do not have adequate empirical support are merged, refined, or discarded. This iterative process reinforces analytical rigor and ensures that themes are based on data rather than isolated statements.

The fifth phase consists of defining and naming the theme, where each completed theme is clearly articulated in terms of conceptual meaning, scope, and relevance to the research question. At this stage, the theme is explicitly related to the analytical framework used in the research. Internal themes were interpreted using the Resource-Based View and VRIO framework to assess the strategic value of resources and capabilities, while external themes

were examined through Porter's Five Forces to evaluate industry pressures. The integration of internal and external themes is then compiled through SWOT analysis and outlined into strategic alternatives using the TOWS matrix.

The final phase involves interpretation and synthesis, where refined themes are translated into strategic insights and discussed in relation to the existing literature. Thematic findings are not treated as stand-alone outcomes, but rather as inputs for strategic formulation. Therefore, the results of TOWS' analysis are operationalized through Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and digital marketing frameworks, ensuring that final recommendations are analytically based, contextually relevant, and practically feasible.

Throughout the analysis process, data triangulation is applied by cross-referencing interview data with internal company documents, market metrics, and secondary sources. This approach increases the credibility and credibility of findings by reducing reliance on a single data source. The systematic application of thematic analysis, combined with a set strategic framework, ensures that the analysis process is transparent, replicable, and aligned with the objectives of this qualitative case study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Findings: Internal Resources and Capabilities (RBV-VRIO Analysis)

This section presents empirical findings related to Sentraloka Indonesia's internal resources and capabilities, analyzed through a Resource-Based View (RBV) and evaluated using the VRIO framework. These findings come from in-depth and semi-structured interviews with three key internal informants: the founder (Bima, 27 years old, ±45 minutes), the operational staff (Yusuf, 25 years old, ±30 minutes), and the marketing staff (Sofia, 22 years old, ±35 minutes). The analysis revealed that although Sentraloka has several valuable and potentially strategic resources, limitations in organizational capabilities significantly limit the company's ability to transform these resources into a sustainable competitive advantage.

From the perspective of tangible resources, Sentraloka's main physical assets consist of an average monthly inventory of around 1,200-1,500 units of products, a small warehouse space of about 10 square meters, basic packaging equipment, and active digital storefronts in large marketplaces such as Shopee and Tokopedia. These resources allow companies to conduct day-to-day operations and participate in the digital retail ecosystem. However, consistent with RBV theory, such tangible assets are relatively easy to acquire and replicate, especially in market environments with low barriers to entry. As a result, even if these resources meet the value criterion (V), they do not meet the criteria of scarcity (R) or inability (I), and therefore cannot function as a source of sustained competitive advantage.

More strategically significant insights emerged from Sentraloka's intangible resources. The founders highlighted that the company has achieved more than 10,000 cumulative product sales in its first year of operation, resulting in a strong market reputation that is reflected in an average customer rating of about 4.8 out of 5. This reputation capital plays an important role in reducing perceived purchase risks and increasing consumer confidence in a highly competitive digital market. In addition, Sentraloka has developed early-stage relational relationships with approximately 25 MSME suppliers, supported by internal knowledge related to product legality, halal certification, and market-fit evaluation. These relational and knowledge-based resources are socially embedded and path-dependent, exhibiting characteristics of social

complexity and experiential learning. From VRIO's perspective, these intangible assets clearly meet the value criteria (V), exhibit elements of scarcity (R), and have partial incapacities (I), mainly due to the difficulty of replicating trust-based supplier relationships and contextual market knowledge.

Despite this potential, the analysis identified critical organizational constraints that prevented Sentraloka from fully utilizing its intangible resource base. Empirical evidence from internal interviews shows the absence of formal organizational systems and integrative processes. Inventory management remains largely manual and spreadsheet-based, resulting in frequent stock mismatches and restocking delays of about three to five days. Content planning and execution lack standard operating procedures, leading to irregular posting schedules and inconsistent brand messaging across platforms. In addition, although Sentraloka has an estimated repeat customer base of around 200 buyers, as noted by marketing staff, customer data is not systematically organized or used through CRM mechanisms for retention or personalization purposes. These findings show that Sentraloka failed to meet the "Organization" (O) criteria of the VRIO framework.

From a capability standpoint, Sentraloka shows a level of operational agility, especially in market execution. The average order processing time is under 12 minutes per transaction, and the company demonstrates functional competence in utilizing market advertising tools. However, high-level strategic marketing capabilities—such as integrated content planning, cross-channel coordination, and narrative-driven brand communication—remain underdeveloped. Marketing activities are mostly tactical and sales-oriented, focusing on short-term conversions rather than long-term brand equity formation. This capability gap contributes directly to the company's reliance on paid marketplace advertising and its limited ability to generate stable organic demand.

The failure to meet the Organization(O) dimension emerged as the most critical finding of this internal analysis. Although Sentraloka has valuable, relatively rare, and hard-to-replicate intangible resources such as market credibility, MSME supplier relationships, and local product knowledge, these resources are not supported by adequate organizational systems, routines, and coordination mechanisms. As a result, the company's resource gains remain temporary or unrealized. These organizational shortcomings provide a unifying explanation for some of the interconnected business problems identified earlier, including stagnant sales, reliance on paid advertising, fragmented communication, and weak brand recall.

Overall, the RBV-VRIO analysis shows that Sentraloka's core challenge lies not in the absence of strategic resources, but in the organization's inadequate ability to exploit them systematically. Strengthening the Organizational (O) dimension—especially through integrated communication systems, standardized processes, and data-driven digital marketing capabilities—is therefore a strategic prerequisite for transforming the potential of existing resources into a sustainable competitive advantage. These insights form the basis for the subsequent external pressure analysis, strategic synthesis, and development of IMC-based solutions discussed in the following sections.

In this study, the evaluation of VRIO used three symbols to represent the level of fulfillment of the criteria. A checkmark (✓) indicates that the criteria are fully met based on consistent empirical evidence. The cross (X) indicates that the criteria are not met. The delta symbol (△) is used to indicate partial fulfillment, where the resource shows potential value but

lacks organizational support or structural reinforcement. These differences allow for a more nuanced interpretation of resources that can be a source of sustained competitive advantage if developed strategically.

TOWS Matrix: Translating Diagnosis into Strategic Directions

Building on SWOT diagnoses, the TOWS Matrix is used to systematically translate analytical insights into actionable strategic alternatives. While SWOT identifies *what a* company's strategic position is, TOWS discusses *how* the company should respond. In this study, the TOWS Matrix serves as a central decision-making mechanism that bridges empirical diagnosis with strategic interventions.

The Strength-Opportunity (SO) strategy emphasizes leveraging Sentraloka's existing strengths to take advantage of favorable external conditions. Given the company's well-established market reputation and operational efficiency, one of SO's key strategies involves strengthening brand-led growth through storytelling-driven digital content that highlights MSME partnerships and product authenticity. By integrating a short video format that showcases product textures, packaging processes, and supplier stories, Sentraloka can exploit the growing dominance of video-based commerce while strengthening trust and differentiation. This approach aligns internal credibility with external content consumption trends.

The Weakness–Opportunity (WO) strategy focuses on using external opportunities to reduce internal constraints. The increasing accessibility of low-cost digital tools presents an opportunity to address the weaknesses of Sentraloka's organization. For example, the adoption of basic inventory management software and content scheduling tools can significantly reduce operational inconsistencies without requiring a large capital investment. Additionally, collaborations with micro-influencers and affiliate creators can compensate for limited internal marketing capacity while increasing content output and reach.

The Force-Threat (ST) strategy is designed to harness internal forces to counteract external risks. Sentraloka's relatively strong customer ratings and repeat buyer base can be leveraged to reduce vulnerability to price-based competition by emphasizing value rather than price alone. Strategies such as curated product bundles, limited-edition MSME collaborations, and loyalty-based incentives can help reduce buyership and reduce direct price comparability with competitors.

A Weakness-Threat (WT) strategy represents a defensive action aimed at minimizing exposure to internal and external risks. Given the thin margins and fragility of the organization, Sentraloka must avoid over-reliance on paid advertising and unsustainable discounts. Instead, prioritizing operational disciplines—such as inventory accuracy, supplier coordination, and content consistency—serves as a risk reduction mechanism. In extreme scenarios, strategic SKU rationalization may be necessary to reduce operational complexity and tension.

Collectively, TOWS Matrix shows that Sentraloka's most viable strategic path lies in a hybrid WO-SO approach, where internal structural improvements allow the company to exploit digital content opportunities and gradually move from promotion-driven sales to brand- and relationship-based growth.

Table 1. TOWS Strategic Matrix for Sentraloka Indonesia

CRANE MATRIX – SENTRALOKA
SO – Strength × Opportunity
Take advantage of the uniqueness of MSME products through content storytelling and build a brand narrative that emphasizes local authenticity.
WO – Weakness × Opportunity
Develop a structured content calendar to increase brand awareness and Reduce ad reliance through organic social media.
ST – Strength × Threat
Use supplier exclusivity to avoid price competition and Strengthen brand trust to reduce market competition.
WT – Weakness × Threat
Limit paid ads during low-margin periods and Focus on core best-selling products.

(Source: Author's analysis based on SWOT synthesis and interview findings, 2025

Integrated Marketing Communications

The strategic alternatives generated through the TOWS matrix are then operationalized through a digital marketing framework based on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which serves as the main execution mechanism that connects strategic intentions with market-facing activities. In this study, IMC is not only positioned as a promotional coordination tool, but as a strategic integrator designed to address the fundamental organizational limitations of Sentraloka Indonesia—namely, fragmented communication and weak cross-channel alignment—which are identified as major weaknesses in the Organization (O) dimension of the VRIO framework.

Empirical findings from interviews with internal informants reveal that Sentraloka's current growth pattern remains highly dependent on market-driven short-term conversion tactics, especially paid advertising. While these tactics have resulted in periodic sales spikes, they have failed to translate into brand equity or ongoing customer loyalty. This condition is closely related to the absence of structured content planning, limited human resources dedicated to marketing functions, and lack of coordination between market communication, social media activities, and customer relationship management. As a result, Sentraloka's digital presence operates in a fragmented multichannel manner, rather than as an integrated brand system.

Insights from external informants—seasoned digital shoppers who have previously purchased snack products through marketplaces and social media—provide important validation of these internal constraints. Throughout the interview, external informants consistently emphasized that trust in digital snack purchases is primarily shaped by visual credibility, message consistency, and peer validation. Short video content that shows product texture, portion size, and consumption experience is repeatedly identified as the most influential factor during the awareness and consideration stage. In contrast, fragmented communication—such as inconsistent visuals between marketplace listings and social media platforms, irregular posting schedules, or unclear product information—is widely perceived as a signal of low professionalism and diminished brand credibility.

These findings point to structural inconsistencies between Sentraloka's existing communication practices and consumer expectations. While marketplace listings are optimized for transactional conversions, social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok are underutilized as channels for building trust and shaping narratives. This disconnect undermines

Sentraloka's ability to guide consumers coherently throughout the customer journey, from awareness and consideration to conversions and repeat purchases, thereby reinforcing its reliance on paid advertising.

In response to this inconsistency, the IMC strategy derived from the TOWS analysis prioritizes cross-channel consistency and narrative coherence as strategic imperatives over tactical additions. The Strength-Opportunity (SO) and Weakness-Opportunity (WO) strategies emphasize leveraging Sentraloka's market reputation and MSME-focused positioning to exploit opportunities in short video trading and increasing consumer interest in local products. This strategic direction is operationalized through three pillars of integrated communication: product credibility, MSME storytelling, and functional value communication. Product credibility is strengthened through standardized visual presentation and disclosure of legal status, halal certification, and consistent product specifications across all digital touchpoints. MSME storytelling is used selectively to humanize the brand and differentiate Sentraloka from generic snack retailers, while functional value communication addresses price sensitivity by emphasizing taste quality, portion size, and perceived price fairness.

Importantly, the proposed IMC implementation explicitly takes into account the constraints of Sentraloka's internal resources. Instead of relying on high-budget influencer campaigns or aggressive paid advertising, this strategy emphasizes content standardization, reusable short video formats, gradual capability development, and the integration of low-cost communication channels like WhatsApp for repeat customer engagement. This approach is in line with the Strength-Threat (ST) and Weakness-Threat (WT) strategies identified in the TOWS matrix, ensuring that strategic recommendations remain viable within the constraints of the company's organization.

Based on these findings, Integrated Marketing Communication in this study is conceptualized as a strategic mechanism for strengthening organizational capabilities, not just a promotional function. By building a structured, repeatable, and coordinated communication process across digital channels, IMC directly enhances the Organizational (O) dimension of the VRIO framework. Through a unified content theme, synchronized messaging, and integrated customer touchpoints, IMC serves as an organizational integrator that reduces fragmentation, streamlines internal processes, and enables Sentraloka to more effectively exploit valuable, scarce, and hard-to-replicate intangible resources.

Through this strategic alignment, IMC serves as an important link between the potential of internal resources and the realized market performance. By transforming fragmented digital activities into a cohesive brand system, IMC and its proposed digital marketing framework position Sentraloka Indonesia to reduce reliance on short-term promotional tactics and progressively build sustainable brand equity in the highly competitive digital snack market.

Strategic Coordination between TOWS and IMC

Strategic alternatives formulated through the TOWS matrix are translated into operational actions through the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework. In this study, IMC serves as a strategic execution mechanism that aligns Sentraloka Indonesia's internal strengths and limitations with external market opportunities and threats identified during the analysis stage. Rather than positioning IMC as just a promotional tool, the findings suggest that IMC should function as an integrative system that connects strategic intentions, resource capabilities, and consumer-facing communication.

Insights from internal informants revealed that Sentraloka's main strengths lie in market credibility, operational efficiency, and its position as a distributor of MSME products, while its main weaknesses are related to limited human resources, fragmented content execution, and the absence of a structured branding system. At the same time, interviews with external digital buyers consistently highlight the importance of visual credibility, message consistency, short video content, and peer validation through reviews and ratings. Some informants emphasized that inconsistencies between marketplace listings and social media content can reduce perceived professionalism and trust, even when product quality is acceptable.

These findings demonstrate a clear alignment between the strategic needs identified in the TOWS matrix and the role of IMC as a coordination framework. Strength–Opportunity (SO) strategies, such as leveraging market reputation and MSME narratives, are operationalized through content strategies that emphasize transparency, legality, and storytelling across short video platforms. Weakness-Opportunity (WO) strategies, especially those that address inconsistent content and limited branding capabilities, translate into low-cost, process-oriented IMC actions, including content calendars, standard visual templates, and narrative guidelines that reduce reliance on paid advertising.

Similarly, the Strength-Threat (ST) strategy is reflected in communication efforts that strengthen trust and credibility to reduce stiff price competition and buyer switching behavior. This is achieved through a consistent display of ratings, reviews, and repeat customer signals across all digital touchpoints. Meanwhile, the Weakness-Threat (WT) strategy focuses on defensive alignment, ensuring that Sentraloka does not overestimate its limited resources. Instead of pursuing aggressive multi-platform expansion, IMC's implementation prioritizes gradual capability development, platform integration, and message consistency, as recommended by internal stakeholders and external informants.

In this alignment, IMC becomes a strategic mediator that transforms abstract strategic alternatives into concrete and feasible actions throughout the customer journey. The resulting communication strategy emphasizes coherence over volume, credibility over promotion, and sustainability over short-term sales spikes. This approach directly responds to empirical findings from interviews, where digital shoppers consistently point out that trust, clarity, and consistency play a more decisive role in repeat purchases than promotional intensity alone.

Table 2. TOWS Strategy → IMC Action Mapping

TOWS Dimensions	Strategic Focus	Key Interview Insights
SO (Strength–Opportunity)	Leverage the market credibility and MSME position to capture the growing demand for digital snacks	Buyers appreciate MSME ratings, reviews, and narratives when they are clearly communicated; Short video content greatly influences purchasing decisions
WO (Weakness–Opportunity)	Reduce reliance on paid advertising by strengthening organic brand communication	In-house staff noted inconsistent content execution; External informants expect organized and professional visuals
ST (Strength–Threat)	Use trust-based communication to reduce price competition and buyer switching	Digital shoppers are very price-sensitive but remain loyal to trusted sellers
WT (Weakness–Threat)	Avoid over-extension under resource constraints and fierce competition	Internal informants highlighted limited human resources and lack of SOPs; Buyers penalize inconsistencies

Source: Synthesis of interview data with internal and external informants, 2025

Business Solutions

Based on the synthesis of internal and external analysis and strategic alternatives generated through the TOWS matrix, this study proposes a digital marketing solution based on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) as a core business solution for Sentraloka Indonesia. The solution was designed not only as a promotional intervention, but as a strategic response to the structural and systemic challenges identified in the findings, particularly sales stagnation, over-reliance on paid marketplace advertising, fragmented brand communication, and limited organizational capacity.

Empirical findings from internal informants show that Sentraloka's current sales performance relies heavily on market advertising, with limited organic traffic and weak customer retention mechanisms. At the same time, external informants consistently emphasize the importance of visual credibility, rating-based trust, short video exposure, and consistency of messages across platforms. These insights show that the main business problem facing Sentraloka is not the absence of demand, but the absence of a coherent communication system capable of converting awareness into trust and repeat purchases.

Therefore, the proposed business solution is centered on a strategic IMC restructuring, which integrates market optimization, social media storytelling, short video commerce, and basic CRM practices into an integrated customer journey. This solution aligns directly with Sentraloka's internal strengths—such as reputation, MSME-focused positioning, and operational agility—while addressing internal weaknesses related to inconsistent content production, lack of brand identity, and organizational fragmentation.

IMC-based business solutions emphasize three strategic pillars. First, strengthening brand credibility, achieved through standardized visual presentation, transparent product information, and the use of consistent ratings and reviews as social proof. Second, narrative differentiation, which utilizes MSME storytelling to create emotional connections without ignoring functional product attributes such as taste, portion size, and price fairness—aspects that are repeatedly highlighted by external informants. Third, relationship consolidation, implemented through repeat customer engagement using low-cost CRM tools (e.g., WhatsApp broadcasts and follow-up messages), thereby reducing reliance on paid advertising.

Importantly, these business solutions are intentionally designed to be resource-sensitive. Instead of relying on high ad spend or complex technology systems, the proposed approach prioritizes content consistency, cross-channel integration, and gradual capability development. In this way, the solution responds to the realities of Sentraloka's organization while laying the foundation for sustainable brand-based growth.

These insights show that the main business problem facing Sentraloka is not the absence of demand, but the absence of a coherent Integrated Marketing Communication system capable of transforming fragmented exposures into trust formation and repetitive buying behaviors.

Implementation Plan and Justification
1. Implementation Plan

The implementation of the proposed IMC-based business solution is structured into a phased plan over a period of 6-12 months, ensuring feasibility within Sentraloka's current resource constraints. The plan focuses on progressive capability development rather than immediate large-scale execution.

The initial phase prioritizes standardization and alignment across digital touchpoints. Marketplace listings are optimized by bringing together product titles, descriptions, visual layouts, and legal information (halal, BPOM/PIRT), responding directly to external informants' emphasis on credibility and clarity. Simultaneously, basic brand guidelines—which include tone of voice, visual style, and key message—are established to ensure consistency across Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp communications.

Content production during this phase focuses on short video formats, especially product reviews, unboxing, and texture-focused visuals, which are repeatedly identified by external informants as the most influential purchasing decision drivers. Post consistency takes precedence over volume, with realistic and sustainable production frequencies aligned with existing organizational capacity.

The second phase emphasizes cross-channel integration and engagement. Instagram and TikTok content are explicitly linked to marketplace listings through embedded links and call-to-action messages. WhatsApp was introduced as a soft CRM channel for order confirmations, repeat purchase reminders, and limited promotional campaigns, leveraging Sentraloka's existing database of repeat buyers through low-cost, non-automated CRM practices. At this stage, collaborations with micro-influencers or affiliate creators are implemented selectively, focusing on credibility and relevance rather than follower size. This approach is in line with external informants' preference for authentic reviews over blatant advertising.

The final stage focuses on performance evaluation and optimization. Basic metrics—such as organic traffic growth, repeat purchase rate, engagement rate, and ad-to-revenue ratio—are monitored to assess effectiveness. Ad spend is gradually reallocating from broad campaigns to targeted retargeting, reducing inefficiencies and cost dependencies.

2. Justification of the Proposed Strategy

The proposed implementation plan is justified on three interrelated grounds: empirical alignment, theoretical coherence, and operational feasibility.

From an empirical perspective, the strategy directly reflects the findings of the interview. External informants consistently highlight the important role of short video exposure, visual credibility, and peer validation, while internal informants acknowledge fragmented communication and lack of consistency as major obstacles. The gradual implementation of IMC directly addresses this gap.

From a theoretical standpoint, this strategy aligns with the Resource-Based View and VRIO frameworks by prioritizing intangible resources—such as brand reputation, narrative authenticity, and relational capital—that are difficult to replicate and can result in a sustained competitive advantage. The integration of TOWS and IMC ensures that strategic recommendations are not general, but explicitly come from internal-external alignment.

From an operational point of view, this strategy is realistic for resource-constrained MSMEs. It avoids high fixed costs, relies on the development of additional capabilities, and leverages platforms that are already familiar to organizations. This ensures that the strategy is not only conceptually sound but also practically implementable.

This strategic coherence also reflects the alignment between the configuration of internal resources (RBV-VRIO) and external competitive pressures (Five Forces), ensuring that the proposed solutions are not only market-oriented but also resource-contingent.

The implementation timeline is compiled into a 12-month staged Gantt chart to ensure operational feasibility and strategic coherence. Phase 1 (Months 1–3) focused on building a communication foundation through market optimization, brand guideline development, and initiation of short video content, responding directly to findings related to credibility gaps and message inconsistencies. Phase 2 (Months 4–6) emphasizes cross-channel engagement and integration, particularly through WhatsApp-based CRM activation and selective micro-influencer collaboration, aligned with external informant preferences for authentic peer validation. Phase 3 (Months 7–12) concentrates on consolidation and optimization, where performance indicators are systematically monitored and advertising efficiency is refined to reduce reliance on paid promotions. This gradual implementation ensures gradual capability development while maintaining strategic alignment with Sentraloka's resource constraints and empirical findings.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Sentraloka Indonesia has clear potential to achieve Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) through intangible internal resources, particularly its market reputation, accumulated consumer trust, and socially embedded relationships with MSME partners. These resources theoretically meet the Value (V), Scarcity (R), and Inimitability (I) criteria within the Resource-Based View (RBV) and VRIO frameworks. However, this potential competitive advantage has not been fully realized due to persistent weaknesses in the Organization (O) dimension of the VRIO model, manifested primarily in fragmented communication practices, underdeveloped organizational systems, and limited integration across digital channels. In response to the first research objective, the study found that Sentraloka's internal challenges are not rooted in a lack of resources, but rather in the organization's inadequate readiness to systematically exploit them. Manual inventory management, inconsistent content planning, poor utilization of customer data, and uncoordinated digital touchpoints collectively prevent the company from translating its intangible strengths into sustainable performance outcomes. These organizational shortcomings explain why Sentraloka's sales growth remains volatile despite its strong market rating and initial relational capital with MSME suppliers. Addressing the second research objective, an external analysis using Porter's Five Forces revealed that Sentraloka operates in a highly competitive digital snack retail environment characterized by strong buyer power, intense rivalry, low switching costs, and market saturation. In such a context, reliance on price-based competition and short-term paid advertising is insufficient to ensure long-term survival. Instead, the findings suggest that brand credibility, communication consistency, and trust-based engagement are decisive success factors, especially from the perspective of digitally savvy shoppers. Through a synthesis of SWOT and TOWS, the study demonstrates that Sentraloka's most viable strategic direction lies in leveraging its reputational and relational strengths while addressing internal organizational weaknesses through opportunity-driven digital communication. Translating these strategic alternatives into an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)-based digital marketing framework provides a coherent mechanism for

aligning internal capabilities with external consumer expectations, particularly regarding short-video credibility, peer validation, and cross-channel message consistency. Overall, the study concludes that IMC serves not only as a promotional tool, but as a strategic organizational integrator. By strengthening VRIO's Organizational (O) dimension through an integrated communication process, Sentraloka can transition from promotion-driven sales activation to brand- and relationship-driven growth, thereby reducing reliance on market volatility and building a more sustainable competitive position.

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