

STRATEGY IDENTIFY OF *SAHABAT NK* TO INCREASE THE SALES VOLUME OF *NK* BRAND CORN HYBRID SEED IN PROBOLINGGO CITY

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Abstract: East Java Province is the largest province as a producer of grain dry corn in Indonesia in 2020 with a harvested area of 1.19 million hectares with a total production of 5.37 million tons with an average productivity value of 4.51 tons per hectare. Therefore, this research aims to identify promotion strategies collaboration with grower champion also to develop main criteria of Sahabat NK that have prioritize recruit in the future to increase sales volume of NK brand hybrid corn seeds in Probolinggo City. The research method is qualitative by using study case approaching combine with Composite Performance Index (CPI) with 10 informants as the as the source of data. The research results that grower prefer to join face to face meeting rather than virtual meeting collaboration with grower champion for every promotion activity and need to add corn grower as well as grain trader for more increase the sales volume of NK brand hybrid corn seeds in Probolinggo City.

Keywords: hybrid corn seed, CPI, grower champion, promotion strategy, case study

Abstrak: Provinsi Jawa Timur merupakan provinsi terbesar penghasil biji jagung kering di Indonesia pada tahun 2020 dengan luas panen 1,19 juta hektar dengan total produksi 5,37 juta ton dengan nilai produktivitas rata-rata 4,51 ton per hektar. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi strategi promosi bersama dengan petani teladan serta mendapatkan kriteria utama Sahabat NK yang diprioritaskan direkrut dimasa yang akan datang guna meningkatkan volume penjualan benih jagung hibrida merek NK di Kota Probolinggo. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus yang dipadukan dengan Composite Performance Index (CPI) dengan 10 informan sebagai narasumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa petani lebih memilih untuk mengikuti pertemuan tatap muka daripada pertemuan virtual bersama dengan petani teladan untuk setiap kegiatan promosi dan perlu menambah petani jagung sekaligus pengepul jagung pipilan untuk lebih meningkatkan volume penjualan benih jagung hibrida merek NK di Kota Probolinggo.

Kata kunci: benih jagung hibrida, CPI, petani teladan, strategi promosi, studi kasus

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INTRODUCTION

East Java is the largest province as a main producer of corn dry grain in Indonesia in 2020 with a harvested area of 1.19 million hectares with a total production of 5.37 million tons with an average productivity value of 4.51 tons per hectare. When compared to the province of Central Java, this area is almost doubled with a productivity of 5.18 tons/ha. At the city government level, Probolinggo City has the widest corn harvest area of 4.1 thousand hectares with the highest production of 24.7 thousand tons and the highest productivity of 5.9 tons/ha. This showed that corn growers in Probolinggo City implemented intensification of corn cultivation practice so it improved productivity above the East Java province average of 5 tons / hectare and above the national average of 5.8 tons / hectare (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Trade (Permendag) No. 7, year 2020, the reference price for purchasing corn dry grain with a moisture content of 15% is IDR 3,150/Kg. The price of corn dry grain has continued to increase during the previous five months from Rp 4,470/Kg in January 2021 to Rp 6,200/Kg in May 2021. Thus, the grain price in the field is currently above the reference price for purchasing dry shelled corn from the government (Ekarina, 2020).

In Indonesia, nowadays the major players of hybrid corn seed business are Syngenta, Pioneer – Corteva Agriscience, BISI/Charoen Phokpand, Advanta Seed – UPL and PT. Agri Makmur Pertiwi. PT Bisi Internasional Tbk (BISI) become market leader for domestic hybrid corn seed market about 50% of the market share, the rest is taken by other seed producers such as PT. Pioneer Indonesia, PT. Branita Sandhini (Monsanto Indonesia), PT. Syngenta Indonesia, PT Agri Makmur Pertiwi and PT Advanta Seed Indonesia. Therefore, the popularity of hybrid corn seeds in the community shows that the hybrid corn seed business is still very promising (Sihombing, 2020).

PT Bisi Internasional Tbk in 2008 increased supply volume to 1.419% after implementation of above the line and below the line promotion strategy, as for the kind of above the line implementation is the implementation of promotional activities such as grower meeting, field day and installation of promotional tools. While below the line is advertising through television and radio (Dewi, 2009). Promotional activities have an

insignificant impact on the sales volume of hybrid corn seeds and the other three variables, such as personal selling, sales promotion, and publicity, show that those activities have a significant effect by increasing sales volume at each increase in costs (Riana, 2011). Product quality and brand image have a significant influence on purchasing decisions for hybrid corn seeds at the grower level (Mardiastiorini, 2018).

There is no significant change of source information for grower reference in making decisions to buy agricultural inputs, both before the COVID-19 pandemic and during the COVID-19 pandemic condition, were obtained from friends/relatives/neighbors, while private extension workers were not obtained individually. Access to information during the COVID-19 pandemic is relatively easier, due to online media does not recognize space and time. Growers' information access during the pandemic is relatively difficult because of social restrictions (Indraningsih et al. 2020). There is significant change in the customer journey, customers in the digital era have trust the factors of friends (friends), families (family), Facebook fans and followers (Twitter) rather than advertisements and expert opinions. (Kotler et al. 2017).

Grower champions naturally emerge confident in implement the new knowledge, if it seems give benefit, they will continue to develop the application of their insights and generously share knowledge and become a source of reference for other growers (Turner et al. 2015). Grower champions can always be seen by their appearance which is always respected by other fellow growers (Mills et al. 2018). A grower champion is characterized by being enthusiastic, credible, influential, and visionary who will make a personal commitment to making successful alliances and realizing their goals (Homlund & Fulton, 1995). Growers have a high tendency to access kind of communication and information channels for the procurement of premium seeds and their selection techniques through grower champions (Pertiwi & Saleh, 2010). The existence of grower champions is trusted by the grower community as well as community leaders to community groups. Although on the other side, the existence of a grower champion can potentially become a challenge for the grower community to develop new technology if the presence of the grower champion has a dominant influence (Septiarani & Handayani, 2016). CPI able to transform difference scale to become uniformity of

numeric until found alternative score, then the sort of those alternatives based on the value will support to make decision so that will have same measurement for one alternative (Diana, 2018).

This study aims to strategy identify of Sahabat NK in the future to increase sales volume of NK brand hybrid corn seeds in Probolinggo City.

METHODS

This research is qualitative with case study method by using inductive and deductive to provide answers to the main problem focus. Case study research is qualitative comprehensive research that covers kind of physical and psychological aspects of an individual/ person, with the main objective of gaining an in-depth understanding of the focus case that being studied (Samsu, 2017). The case study method is a qualitative method that focus on explore a particular case with more depth analysis by involving the various sources of information collection (Raco, 2010). The way to explore a particular case become study case method also can be by exploring a problem with detailed boundaries, having in-depth data collection, and including various sources of information. This research has limited time and place, and the case can be studied based on programs, events, activities, or individuals (Rony, 2017)

The Composite Performance Index (CPI) method are combination of index (Composite Index) that can utilize to determined score or ranking of multi alternative options based on multi criteria (Rangkuti, 2011). CPI method is a combined performance index-based method from various alternatives to non-uniformity criteria (Sarumaha, 2020). CPI able to transform different scale to be uniform score till the alternative score obtained. Those alternatives that had been rate by value will support for decision making so it will have same value to one alternative chosen (Karismariyanti, 2011). The CPI method requires several weighted criteria to help calculations for the best results or alternative (Tanjung et al. 2018).

This study uses in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) methods from informants. Informants within this study are those who are expertise/practitioners in the field of hybrid corn seed industry

such as: Representatives of internal PT Syngenta Indonesia Seed Division of Probolinggo City, distributor/retailer management, local government representatives in this case the Department of Agriculture, Food Security and Fisheries of Probolinggo City and local hybrid corn growers as end users as Sahabat NK. This research was conducted from November 31st, 2021, to January 31st, 2022. Therefore 10 informants as experts in the hybrid corn seed industry.

Hypotheses are: is the communication to grower by using Zoom application will effective during COVID 19 pandemic situation? And is the priority of Sahabat NK's criteria in the future to increase the sales volume of NK brand corn seeds in Probolinggo City is Corn Growers Retailer Agriculture Inputs/Grain Trader?

To get right recruiting strategy of Sahabat NK member and ensure main communication channel with grower during COVID 19 pandemic situation, the study focus on grower meeting activity that conduct through Zoom application also identify grower champion that recruited as Sahabat NK. Based on those condition will analysis using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among 10 expertise as informants then continue measure with Composite Performance Index (CPI). So, it will get result that become valuable feedback to evaluate the strategy promotion implemented and in the future.

RESULTS

Based on Table 1, optimization of the promotion mix's by involving the participation of grower champions who are members of Sahabat NK in Probolinggo City is very helpful in increasing the sales volume of NK brand hybrid corn seeds. Thus, there are still many things that need to be done in the future to maintain its position as the market leader for hybrid corn seeds in Probolinggo City. Thus, making the City of Probolinggo as research material with a case study approach is very appropriate. The promotional strategy implemented so far includes all important aspects and is integrated in a harmonious and appropriate manner (Jauch & Glueck, 1988). Where the elements of the promotional mix blend well in the entire series of promotional activities where each element plays a specific role well (Belch & Belch, 2003).

Table 1. Accumulated research findings on promotion strategy

Promotion Activity	Grower Champion Participation	Marketing Digital	Informant										Promotion Mix						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Advertising	Direct Marketing	Interactive Media	Sales Promotion	Publicity	Personal Selling	
Demonstration Plot	a	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	√	-
Radio Streaming	b	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	√	-
Banner Installation	c	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-
Farm Shop Painting	d	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-
Branding	e	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	√	-
Mural	f	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	√	-
Sales Promotion	g	√	-	√	-	-	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	√
Caravan	h	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	-
Grower Meeting	i	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	-	√	-	√
Field Day	j	√	-	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	-	√
Harvest Festival	k	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	-	√
Retailer Meeting	l	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√
Sahabat NK Gathering	m	√	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	-	-	-
NK Corn Farmer Community	n	√	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	-	-	-
Grain Trader Meeting	o	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	-	√
Factory Tour	p	√	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	-	-
Sample Seed Distribution	q	√	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-
Virtual Grower Meeting	r	√	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	-	-	√	-	√	√	√
Field Day Virtual	s	√	√	-	√	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	√	√	√
Harvest Festival Virtual	t	√	√	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	√	√
Social Media Advertising	u	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	√
TV Advertising	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-	-	√	-

According to informants 7, 8 and 9, it showed that face-to-face promotional activities with growers, although carried out with various limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic, turned out to have a more important role than virtual activities. Because the face-to-face activity was carried out at the planned place where the grower could see firsthand the appearance of the NK brand hybrid corn seeds. This can increase growers' confidence to decide to buy NK brand hybrid corn seeds. Because face-to-face promotional activities such as personal selling, sales promotion and publicity can significantly increase sales volume for hybrid corn seeds (Riana, 2011). By staying focused on the goal of getting attention, educating, reminding, and convincing customers, the promotional activities carried out can increase sales volume significantly (Manap, 2016).

Informants 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 10 suggested to continue implement virtual activities and digital marketing. Because currently there has been behavior change, where social media and information from internet media has play an important role for information sources and community communication mass media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Social media always growth, therefore it is necessary to always use it in a marketing strategy (Rapitasari, 2016). So, interactive relationships can occur between producers, market intermediaries and consumers with easy and integrated manner (Purwana et al. 2017).

Informants 4 and 10 emphasized that they should continue to conduct regularly Sahabat NK gathering activities. Because of this, grower champions have

always been main source of reference regarding superior seeds for other growers (Turner et al. 2015). So, by involving actively grower champions participation as brand ambassadors in promotional activities, they will be able effectively to help influence or invite more other consumers (Prayogi & Djatmiko, 2019).

The factor that can be used when formulating a promotion strategy with grower champions in increasing sales volume of NK brand hybrid corn seeds in Probolinggo City is to involve grower champions in evaluating the effectiveness of each promotional activity that has been conducted. Then take them to share their success and satisfaction experience in planting NK hybrid corn seeds, follow up actively and massively to share the success stories of NK corn growers. Because growers trust more their fellow growers as a buying decision maker consideration.

The grower champions role is very necessary in implementing promotional strategies because they have ability to influence the surrounding grower community (Demme, 1958). Based on this reason, it is very appropriate to strengthen their role as brand ambassadors, because their role has been proven to be able to increase sales volume from year to year (Fauziah, 2020). By optimizing the grower champion role as a brand ambassador, it will be got a positive and significant influence for purchasing decisions, considering that grower champions have popularity and attractiveness (Wajhilah et al. 2020). Socio-cultural and psychological factors have influenced consumers' decision-making process (Misman et al. 2021)

From Table 2. can be explained that the typology priorities in the Sahabat NK membership are Corn Growers Retailer Agriculture Inputs/Grain Trader, then Corn Growers and Administrators of the Grower Group, followed by Corn Growers as well as Agricultural Officers and Corn Growers as well as Government Employees.

Table 2. Calculation composite performance index based on expert opinion

Alternative	Competency			Bayes	Rank	Competency			MPE	Rank
	Ability	Experience	Capability	Alternative Score		Ability	Experience	Capability	Alternative Score	
Corn Grower and Grower Group Administrator	6.8	6.8	5.7	6.5	2	120	136	125	126.4	2
Corn Grower and Grain Trader/Retailer	6.8	7.7	6.4	7.0	1	120	155	140	136.4	1
Corn Grower and Government Officer	5.7	5.0	4.5	5.1	4	100	100	100	100.0	4
Corn Grower and Agriculture Local Officer	7.0	5.9	5.9	6.4	3	124	118	130	124.1	3
Criteria Weight	40%	30%	30%							

Based on the results of the FGD with expert informants, it can be explained that to strengthen its position as a market leader, Corn Growers Retailer Agriculture Inputs/ Grain Traders have an influence in influencing the growers of customers who sell their harvest to them. They also have high competence of the Corn Grower Retailer Agriculture Inputs/ Grain Trader in terms of experience in corn cultivation and early adopter of corn cultivation technology.

The results of this study prove that the category of grower champion as Corn Growers Retailer Agriculture Inputs/ Grain Traders is proven have ability to accelerate the progress of smallholder production in their grower community (Turner et al. 2015). With the ability to access more communication channels than other grower member in their community, grower champions always play a role in providing preferences for of good quality seeds (Pertiwi & Saleh, 2010). Thus, grower champions are always easily characterized in their appearance by their role which is always respected by other farmers (Mills et al. 2018)

Managerial Implications

Promotion strategy among grower champion that implemented by PT Syngenta Indonesia Seed division in Probolinggo City to increase sales volume needs to be continued and further deepened applications further. Because with the promotion strategy among collaboration with grower champions has been proven to increase growers' interest in buying NK brand hybrid corn seeds so NK brand hybrid corn seeds can be recognized and adopted another grower more widely. By more deeply involving grower champions in making policy promotion strategies, it will be helped the company to provide innovative hybrid corn seed products as grower need in the future, with grower themselves standard in terms of product quality, product excellence and prices. Thus, it can increase the effectiveness and market acceptance to produce innovative products based on growers need.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Communication to growers by use Zoom application during the COVID 19 pandemic to growers is still not effective yet with main reason that the adoption of

Zoom application among grower itself is still very low. Growers still rely on information from the experiences of other fellow growers and/or key growers in purchase making decisions for hybrid corn seeds. Within this reason, it is necessary to provide the success stories of growers in the main target area built in image or video media and then share it in digital media such as Youtube or Facebook.

Strategy to identify of Sahabat NK to increase the sales volume of NK brand corn seeds in Probolinggo City in the future is by recruiting Corn Growers Retailer Agriculture Inputs/Grain Trader. By adding Corn Growers Retailer Agriculture Inputs/Grain Trader as an additional member of Sahabat NK in Probolinggo City, the NK brand hybrid corn seed can strengthen its position as a market leader in the hybrid corn seed industry in the future.

Recommendations

Making profit is the main goal of business activities. But the sustainability of the profit (sustainability profit) is more important. To achieve the condition, the company should always involve employees, especially the marketing and sales department, to be closer to their key consumers. So, by involving key consumers for promotion strategy, it will be able to increase sales volume.

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