

Soft Selling Communications Strategies in Building Brand Awareness for “Sasa” on Raditya Dika’s YouTube Account

Content

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Abstract. Marketing in the modern era, namely soft selling, is characterized by the use of digital technology and a more personal approach. This research aims to find out the soft selling communication strategy applied by Sasa in building brand awareness, especially in the promotion of vetsin (MSG) through collaboration with Raditya Dika on YouTube in the content "Who Likes Micin, Watch This!". The research focus includes the target audience, message, method, communicator, media, and communication effects in this promotion. The writing method used is qualitative through a post-positivism approach, with the subject studied being the "Sasa" brand as an entity that implements soft selling communication strategies. The results prove that education-based soft selling communication strategy can be an effective method in building brand awareness and changing public perception of a product. Brand Sasa successfully utilizes digital communication and the right media selection to create an emotional connection by providing educational value for its audience.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Communication Strategy, Digital Communication, Education, Soft Selling.

1. Introduction

The development of information technology and digitalization has brought about major changes in the world of marketing. This transformation has become a strategic step in dealing with the ever-changing dynamics of the business environment and increasingly diverse and complex consumer behavior [1].

Marketing in the modern era, such as soft selling, is characterized by the use of digital technology and a more personalized approach. These changes have led companies to interact directly with consumers through various online platforms, such as social media, websites, and search engines. In soft selling marketing, consumers are the main focus, with an emphasis on a deep understanding of consumer preferences and behavior. This soft selling marketing strategy is designed to create a more personalized and targeted experience, actively involving consumers in the marketing process and building strong long-term relationships [1].

The Sasa brand has come up with an innovative marketing strategy, raising the issue of MSG. The aim is to rebuild brand awareness while changing the negative perception of MSG among the public. Many people claim that MSG can make you stupid, so this issue has been widely discussed. However, the fact is that MSG does not cause stupidity, but excessive consumption can lead to hypertension.

The Sasa brand employs soft selling techniques by promoting a concept focused on education. This approach is implemented in a relevant manner by engaging suitable communicators to convey educational messages in a light and easily digestible way for the public. The strategy is adapted to the digital era through the YouTube platform, including content in an interactive and educational podcast format, where discussions about MSG are presented with scientific facts and narratives that raise public awareness.

In 2015, YouTube became a widely accessed platform by the Indonesian public. YouTube has shifted viewers away from television, resulting in a decline in television viewership among both children and adults [2]. This is because YouTube offers advantages that television does not, such as greater flexibility in allowing viewers to choose any content they desire [3]. The Sasa brand has capitalized on this opportunity and begun adapting to the times by promoting its products on YouTube. They chose Raditya Dika's account as a platform to promote Sasa products, with Raditya Dika as the main communicator and Dr. Tirta as a guest speaker to provide information and education about vetsin (MSG) and health. The use of these communicators aims to increase public trust,

making it easier for the audience to accept the messages conveyed [4]. This is part of the communication strategy implemented by the Sasa brand.

Determining the right communication strategy is important for successful promotion. According to Arifin [5], a communication strategy is a systematic approach that involves comprehensive decision-making related to steps designed to achieve communication goals. This has caught our attention as writers. From selecting the medium, choosing the communicator, crafting the message, to delivering the message using an educational approach and redundancy, all these elements are part of the indicators of a communication strategy. All these elements are carefully considered by the Sasa brand in its promotional efforts, including how audience behavior changes after being exposed to the content.

Soft selling communication strategy is an intriguing approach to promoting products, including the one adopted by the Sasa brand through podcast content on Raditya Dika's YouTube account. This approach does not solely focus on promotion but also emphasizes education. This study focuses on the soft selling communication strategy applied in the podcast content to understand how this promotional approach builds emotional connections with the audience and brand awareness naturally without appearing forced.

Previous research has discussed various communication strategies in different contexts. First, the communication strategy of the National Family Planning Board (BKKBN) in Gunung Jati Subdistrict, Cirebon Regency, in preventing stunting showed positive but not yet optimal results, with challenges including limited funds, technological tools, and human resources [6]. Further research on the development of Galmantro Tourism Village revealed that the credibility of the communicator, audience recognition, media selection, and evaluation are key to effective communication strategies for increasing visitor awareness and engagement, despite low local awareness and limited resources [7]. The third study, on the communication strategy of PT. Jasa Marga (Persero) Tbk Palikanci Branch in promoting the E-Toll Card through social media, advertising, and direct interaction, successfully increased user understanding and satisfaction, despite still facing challenges in top-up services and responsiveness to consumer feedback [8].

Previous studies have several significant differences from this study. In this study, the subject of research is the Sasa brand, which focuses on how the brand uses communication strategies to build brand awareness. Meanwhile, the object of this study is Raditya Dika's YouTube content media, which is the main channel for Sasa to implement soft selling strategies in introducing and strengthening its brand image. This study focuses on the use of soft selling communication strategies in the context of promotion.

This study aims to understand the soft selling communication strategies applied by the Sasa brand in building brand awareness, particularly in promoting vetsin through collaboration with Raditya Dika on the YouTube platform, with the content title "Yang Suka Micin, Nonton Ini" (Those Who Like Micin, Watch This). This approach is important for researching how soft selling strategies in podcast content play a role in building brand awareness and simultaneously creating strong emotional connections with the audience.

2. Literature Review

Communication strategy is a series of conditional decisions related to actions that will be taken to achieve certain goals. Therefore, formulating a communication strategy means considering conditions and situations (both current and possible future ones) in order to achieve effectiveness. With this communication strategy, various methods can be consciously used to utilize communication in creating change in the audience in an easy and quick manner [5].

According to [5], in developing a plan to achieve objectives, there are several steps to formulate a communication strategy. The first step is to understand the audience. Understanding the audience is the initial step for communicators to create effective communication, followed by developing messages that capture interest through specific themes or content. The method of delivery can be reviewed based on how it is implemented and the form of the message content, which is realized according to communication needs. The selection of media also plays a crucial role as a means of conveying messages, which must be tailored to the characteristics of the audience and the communication methods used. Additionally, the role of the communicator is a critical element as the link between information and the audience. Finally, the effects or outcomes of communication reflect the changes that occur in the audience as a result of the messages conveyed.

Communication strategies, like strategies in any other field, must be accompanied by theory, because theory is a form of knowledge based on experience and has undergone a process of testing to prove its validity.

Soft Selling was developed by Stanley Rensor and Helen Lansdowne. This approach aims to target the emotions and subconscious rationality in sales. Soft selling is a subtle technique that presents information or solutions that are acceptable to customers. This technique aims to build trust and long-term relationships so that customers feel comfortable. Soft selling marketing typically begins with a cheerful narrative that initially relates

to the product being sold and is presented in an informative manner. This strategy appears not to be directly selling [9].

The message conveyed by a particular manufacturer or company using soft selling techniques usually begins with a story related to the product being sold. It is presented in an educational manner or through comedy/humor [10].

Brand awareness is how someone or a customer can recognize and remember a brand. Consumers prefer to buy brands that they are familiar with because they feel secure and trust those brands [11]. A familiar brand can become a symbol of quality that consumers feel they can rely on. Consumer awareness of a brand is an important factor, as brands can always be prioritized and considered in purchasing decisions [12].

Brand awareness has several levels that indicate the extent to which consumers recognize and remember a brand. The following sequence of levels illustrates the importance of the relationship between a brand and consumers, starting from Unaware of Brand, Brand Recognition, Brand Recall, and Top of Mind Awareness [13].

Communication is the process of conveying a message from the communicator to the recipient through a specific channel or medium. In this process, the communicator acts as the party conveying the message, while the medium serves as the means to deliver the message to the recipient. Communication is an important element in building understanding between both parties, as it involves structured interaction between the sender and recipient of the message to achieve the desired communication objectives [14].

Advances in information and communication technology have enabled face-to-face interaction, making *digital communication* important as a process that utilizes electronic devices and the internet to connect communicators and communicants. Digital communication, also known as virtual communication, is a form of interaction in which the process of sending and receiving messages takes place through cyberspace or the virtual world [15].

Digital communication has now become an integral part of daily life, transforming human interaction patterns through ease of access, flexibility, and efficiency, and having a wide-reaching impact in the fields of business, work, and even social and cultural relationships.

In the context of promotion, education can be understood as an effort to provide information and knowledge about a product or service to the target audience, with the aim of enhancing their understanding while sparking interest in the product. The main objective is not only to drive sales, but also to increase consumer understanding of the product, build trust, and encourage better purchasing decisions [16]. With an educational approach, producers can create stronger relationships with consumers and increase brand loyalty.

3. Method

This study uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are research methods based on post-positivism philosophy and applied in research that scientifically adapts to the conditions of the object in which the researcher acts as the main instrument [17]. In the context of this study, the subject of research is the “Sasa” brand as an entity that implements a soft selling communication strategy. Meanwhile, the research object includes podcast content on Raditya Dika's YouTube account titled “Yang Suka Micin, Nonton Ini!” (Those Who Like Micin, Watch This!). In accordance with the research problem, the researcher conducted interviews, observations, documentation, and data triangulation.

The theory used is Anwar Arifin's communication strategy theory as a foundation in the research because it has a strong relevance to the focus of the research, namely soft selling communication strategy. This theory is considered appropriate to the direction of the research because it provides six strategic dimensions that can be used as indicators to answer the problem formulation. This theory includes six main dimensions in communication strategy. First, knowing the audience, which is understanding the characteristics, needs, and preferences of the audience targeted for communication. Second, developing messages, which is designing communication content that is interesting, relevant, and in accordance with promotional objectives. Third, determine the method, which is choosing the approach or technique of delivering the message. Fourth, the role of the communicator, which emphasizes the importance of the messenger figure, such as Raditya Dika and doctor Tirta, in influencing audience acceptance. Fifth, media selection, which determines the communication channel used, such as YouTube as the main platform. Finally, the result or effect of communication, which is the impact caused by communication activities, such as in building brand awareness and positive perceptions of the product. This theory is used to understand the extent to which Sasa's strategy is able to achieve its communication goals.

The data collection techniques used in this study refer to primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was obtained by the researcher through interviews with the head of digital marketing at PT Sasa Inti. The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with five audience members who watched the content as supporting data. This was done by the researcher to validate the results of the observations conducted and to obtain a more objective picture of the effectiveness of the soft selling communication strategy in building brand awareness

applied by the “Sasa” brand in Raditya Dika's podcast content. Meanwhile, secondary data came from books and literature studies in the form of journals or articles used as additional data in the research conducted.

The data analysis technique in this study uses three components: reducing data by selecting relevant research data; presenting data using matrices or tables that map the interview results based on specific themes or categories; and drawing conclusions through the interpretation of the data that has been processed and presented previously, ensuring that the data answers the research questions.

4. Result and Discussion

The results were obtained through in-depth interviews with selected informants, and the data collected was then analyzed. This analysis aims to identify and understand the soft selling communication strategies employed by the Sasa brand in building its brand awareness. Additionally, the researcher sought supplementary information from viewers of the promotional content to directly gauge the audience's opinions on the strategies implemented by the Sasa brand. This was done to ensure the research remains objective and accurate, while also assessing the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

4.1 Getting to Know the Audience

Understanding the audience is an important step in creating a targeted strategy. Understanding the audience's interests and needs regarding the brand is essential for designing more relevant and effective promotions [18].

The Sasa brand has identified its target audience for promotions as mothers from Generation Z and Millennials. In determining this target audience, Sasa has strong reasons and considerations based on previous research. This highlights the importance of research as the foundation for developing the right communication strategy. Here is an overview:

”Based on research conducted in 2019, the largest market consists of millennials and Gen Z, and they are the market with the highest purchasing power.” (Interview with Aldina Bahri, Head of Digital Marketing at PT. Sasa Inti 27/12/2024)

This is the main reason why the promotion target is focused on this segment. By understanding the current market potential, Sasa is able to effectively capitalize on existing opportunities to reach its audience. A mother, especially from Generation Z and Millennials, typically needs vetsin as a seasoning or flavor enhancer when preparing meals for her family. By addressing this need, Sasa positions itself as a solution to meet the daily needs of families while strengthening its market position.

The Sasa brand chose to promote its vetsin product through Raditya Dika's account, based on interview results stating that:

“Let's look at Raditya Dika's audience and Sasa's main target audience. We believe that both have similarities in terms of character, interests, and current educational needs.” (Interview with Aldina Bahri, Head of Digital Marketing at PT. Sasa Inti, December 27, 2024)

The target audience for the Sasa brand promotion is millennial and Gen Z mothers, not specifically Gen X. Demographically, this age segmentation is quite relevant to Raditya Dika's character, who is also the main figure in the promotional content. Raditya Dika is known for frequently sharing educational content, which aligns with the promotional concept that adopts an educational approach without coming across as preachy, thanks to his relaxed delivery style, making it well-received.

Raditya Dika's YouTube account is considered relevant because his age range aligns with Sasa's target audience, namely millennials and Gen Z. Additionally, his track record in the entertainment industry since the early 2010s has established a strong audience base among millennials, even before the emergence of Gen Z, who are now also part of his followers. This demonstrates that Raditya Dika has a wide audience reach, making him the right choice to convey promotional messages targeted at this segment

4.2 Composing Messages

The Sasa brand strives to ensure that its promotions are well received by its audience. To achieve this, Sasa uses a relaxed and informal communication style to convey its messages. This approach allows the audience to comfortably follow the information provided without feeling overwhelmed or bored. With a light yet educational style, Sasa creates a familiar and relevant atmosphere for its target market, especially millennials and Gen Z, who tend to prefer casual yet informative content.

In terms of message structure, Sasa uses a step-by-step approach before getting into the main part of the promotion in the content. Sasa uses consistency by bringing up issues that are often discussed by the public. These issues act as a bridge designed to slowly lead the audience to the main topic, which is Sasa's vetsin promotion.

For example, they discuss issues related to MSG that are prevalent in society, such as the belief that MSG can cause stupidity. This approach is used to build an engaging narrative while improving negative sentiment toward their product. Additionally, the consistency in the flow of discussion makes it easier for the audience to follow the promotional content, even though it is quite lengthy.

The promotion employed an effective storytelling strategy. This strategy used an approach that combined elements of character, purpose, obstacles, and brand as the hero. The story conveyed in this promotion depicted Raditya Dika as the main character with the goal of continuing to enjoy delicious food, but facing the obstacle of a myth that consuming MSG can cause stupidity.

This is where Sasa plays the role of the hero in the story, coming to “rescue” Raditya Dika from his concerns. By providing the actual facts, Sasa addresses the myth with the message that it is okay to consume MSG, as long as it is not excessive. If consumed in excess, it can cause hypertension. Sasa effectively conveys her main message: MSG is not harmful, safe for health, and made from natural ingredients.

4.3 Establishing Methods

In delivering promotional messages, the Sasa brand adopts an approach that combines educational methods and redundancy as an effective communication strategy. The educational methods employed by Sasa emphasize health-related aspects, such as providing an understanding that the consumption of vetsin is safe when used in accordance with recommended measurements. This is particularly relevant to the needs of the primary target market, namely mothers, who generally place a high priority on the safety and quality of the food consumed by their families. This approach is part of a soft-selling strategy, where promotions are conducted subtly through the dissemination of useful information.

In the context of promoting a product like Sasa, an educational approach helps bridge the gap in public knowledge about the safety of vetsin consumption. Instead of conveying persuasive messages directly, education-based promotions create an objective and informative impression, which tends to be more easily accepted by audiences. The effectiveness of this strategy also lies in its ability to shape public opinion slowly, without triggering resistance, as the information is delivered in a context that is relevant to everyday life. Thus, the educational element in promotion not only increases brand awareness, but is also able to overhaul the negative stigma that has already developed in society.



Figure 1. The Sasa logo consistently appears on promotional content in vetsin products, as well as merchandise such as T-shirts and bowls.

(Source: Raditya Dika's YouTube channel)

On the other hand, redundancy is applied through the visualization of the Sasa logo, which consistently appears in promotional content. Interestingly, this logo is displayed subtly without being mentioned verbally,

giving an impression that is not pushy or aggressive. This strategy aligns with the principles of soft selling communication, where Sasa successfully implants its brand in the minds of the audience without appearing too “salesy.” The aim is to build brand awareness and strengthen Sasa's brand identity as a key player in the vetsin product market.

4.4 Communicator's Role

Communicators play an important role in the successful delivery of messages [19]. There are two main factors that communicators must have to ensure that messages are received by the target audience, namely appeal and credibility. The credibility of the communicator must be in line with the topic being discussed so that the message is well received.

Sasa selected Raditya Dika and Dr. Tirta as communicators for their product promotion. This selection was based on criteria including a positive image and high engagement. This strategy was designed to enhance audience trust in the messages conveyed. Based on interviews with viewers of the promotional content, many expressed that the primary appeal was the two communicators themselves. As one respondent stated:

"Actually, what sparked my interest was the host, Raditya Dika, because I subscribe to his YouTube channel and follow his work. Another reason I was interested was because of the guest star, Dr. Tirta. I first learned about Dr. Tirta during the COVID-19 pandemic. I know that Dr. Tirta is interesting—in the sense that at first he was quite outspoken, but now he's more playful. So, in my opinion, he's a fascinating figure to follow." (Interview with Ghoris Arkan, December 24, 2024)

Raditya Dika has credibility as an intelligent figure in the field of communication. Therefore, Sasa positioned Raditya Dika as the main communicator who played a role in managing the flow of discussion in the podcast format, creating a relaxed yet focused atmosphere, and ultimately connecting the discussion to the promotion of Sasa products. Meanwhile, Dr. Tirta, with his credibility as a doctor, adds an educational touch to the promotion to strengthen audience trust. This demonstrates that Sasa truly values the importance of selecting communicators who align with the strategies being implemented.

4.5 Media Selection

Communication media are tools used to disseminate and convey information to audiences [20]. In this case, the Sasa brand utilizes YouTube as its primary promotional platform, using podcast content formats. The selection of YouTube as a promotional medium is based on its characteristics, which allow for the presentation of long-form content and flexibility in conveying messages. With the podcast format, Sasa is able to deliver in-depth education while building an emotional connection with the audience.

The duration of podcast content is one of the key aspects of Sasa's communication strategy. The appropriate duration not only influences the appeal of the content but also plays a role in maintaining the audience's attention. Below are the results of the researcher's interviews with several informants regarding the duration:

"In my opinion, the duration is relatively short, but when we look at the final result, I think it's just right, which is about 1 hour. The purpose of Sasa's educational program, with a duration of over 30 minutes or around 1 hour, is that it is hoped that in the future it can be rewatched and analyzed because the discussion is indeed interesting. So, is 1 hour the right duration? The answer for now is yes, it is appropriate for Sasa's ultimate goal." (Interview with Ghoris Arkan, December 24, 2024)

The other informants' answers are as follows:

"For me personally, this podcast is a little too long, because it's almost an hour long. And I think that Indonesians, who cannot yet be considered highly skilled, would still prefer short videos, even though the educational videos are presented in a relaxed manner. And since it addresses various health issues, I think condensing it to 2 or 3 topics would be much more effective. Then, those 2 or 3 topics could be explored in greater depth, and the knowledge shared would be much more impactful." (Interview with Wulan, January 10, 2025).

Based on the interview results, the researcher analyzed that most listeners considered the duration presented to be in line with general podcast standards, making it comfortable to follow, especially since the topics were considered interesting and had long-term educational value. This reflects that longer durations can improve the audience's understanding of the message being conveyed. However, on the other hand, one informant felt that the duration was too long, and that by reducing the number of issues discussed to two or three main topics, the discussion could be more in-depth and effective, thereby making the message more targeted. This difference in perspective illustrates that the strategy of soft selling through long-duration podcasts has advantages in supporting in-depth education, but also has the potential to pose challenges in capturing the attention of audiences who are more accustomed to shorter content formats.

The podcast content format was chosen because it allows for a relaxed, unhurried discussion flow and provides space for more in-depth exploration of topics. This keeps the audience focused and engaged without realizing they are listening to promotional content. This approach is important because audiences tend to resist explicit promotions or those that feel like ordinary ads. Instead, by building an engaging and educational narrative, promotional messages can be conveyed subtly.

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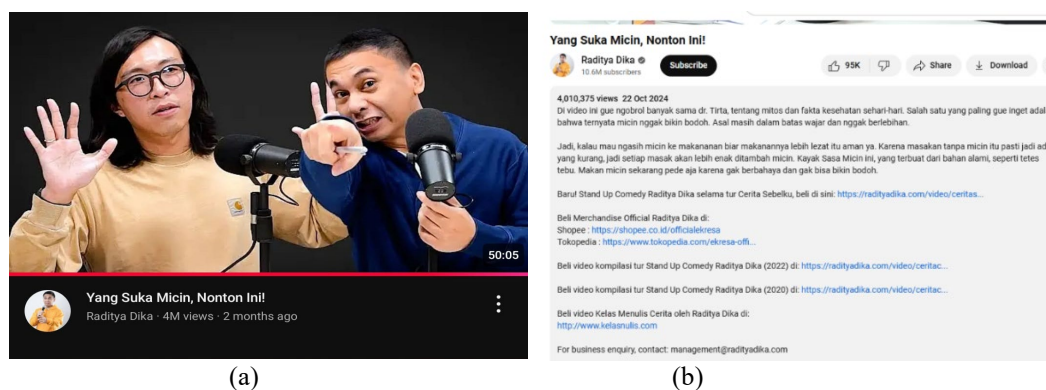


Figure 2. Sasa also strategically utilizes the features available on YouTube to support their promotion.
 (a) Optimization of podcast content titles (b) Optimization of video descriptions that provide brief but informative information about the podcast content.
 (Source: Raditya Dika's YouTube channel)

Sasa strategically utilizes the features available on YouTube to support their promotion. One of the steps taken is optimizing video titles and descriptions. By using keywords such as “Sasa,” “micin,” and “MSG,” they improve search engine optimization (SEO), making their videos easier to find by YouTube users searching for information related to these topics.

4.6 Communication Outcomes or Effects

The expected outcome of this promotion is the creation of positive sentiment towards MSG and the rebuilding of brand awareness for the Sasa brand. Brand awareness must continue to be built and maintained consistently. The market continues to grow with the addition of new generations, so brands must be able to adapt to changes in audience needs and preferences.

To understand the results of Sasa's promotional strategy on the audience, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with various informants who were viewers of the promotional content. These interviews aimed to explore the audience's perceptions and responses to the promotion directly. The following is a description of the results:

“Of course, especially since I come from a family that avoids consuming MSG and according to my family, MSG is bad for your health, but it turns out that statement is wrong. And I became more aware and there is nothing wrong with this Sasa product.” (Interview with Wulan, 12/13/2024).

As for the other informants' answers, here they are:

“Yes, with the explanations and limitations discussed in the podcast, I now understand that MSG is not necessarily harmful. As long as it is used correctly, there is nothing to worry about.” (Interview with Siti Azzizah, April 11, 2025)

Informants indicated a change in perception of MSG, which was previously viewed negatively, as well as renewed awareness of the Sasa brand. This indicates that a more subtle, education-based communication approach can be an effective strategy in shaping opinion and building audience engagement with a brand. Thus, the promotion not only reintroduced the Sasa brand, but also helped change the audience's perception of the products offered.

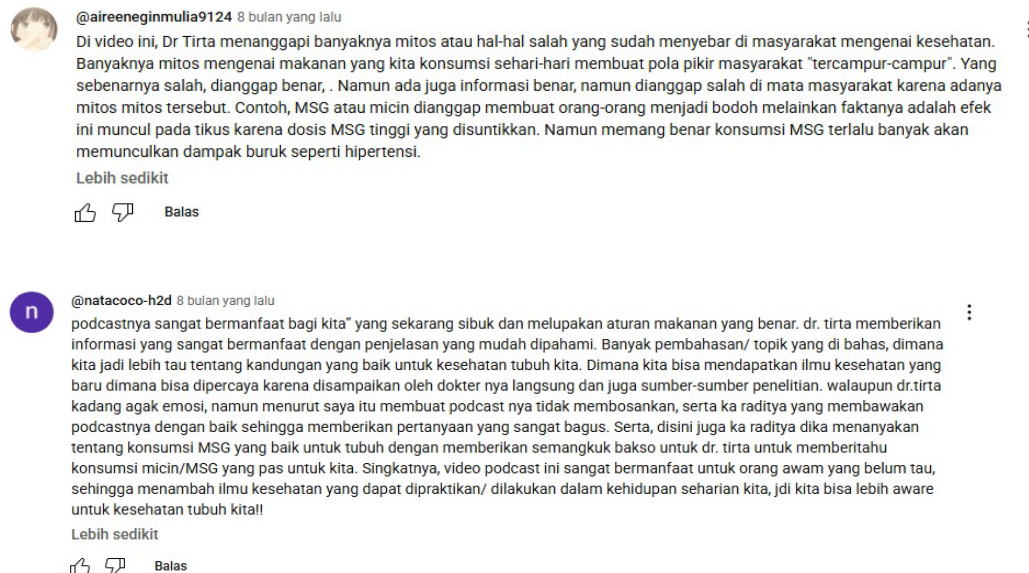


Figure 3. Positive audience responses in the comments section regarding attitude shift and emotional engagement
 (Source: Raditya Dika's YouTube channel)

Some audiences expressed that this approach not only conveyed information subtly, but was also able to build emotional engagement that made them feel closer to the message. In fact, some audiences showed a change in attitude towards vetsin from negative to more open and accepting after watching the content. This indicates that the communication strategy applied not only touches on the informative aspect, but is also effective in shaping the audience's perception and emotional response.

5. Conclusion

This research reveals that the soft selling communication strategy applied by the Sasa brand in podcast content on Raditya Dika's YouTube account has succeeded in building brand awareness effectively. Through an educational and storytelling-based approach, Sasa not only subtly promotes its products but also changes people's negative perceptions of vetsin. The soft selling communication strategies implemented by Sasa include:

- Raditya Dika and Dr. Tirta were chosen as the main communicators because they have high appeal and credibility. Raditya Dika is known for his relaxed and intelligent communication style, while Dr. Tirta as a doctor provides scientific validation regarding the safety of vetsin. The combination of the two makes the audience more receptive to the information conveyed.
- Sasa uses a storytelling technique, where Raditya Dika acts as the main character who faces the myths about vetsin, while Sasa comes as a solution that provides scientific facts. This makes it easier for the audience to understand and remember the message without feeling patronized or forced.
- YouTube was chosen as the main platform as it allows for more in-depth and flexible delivery of content in a podcast format. Although the video duration is quite long (around 1 hour), most audiences find the content interesting as it combines elements of education and entertainment. However, one of the audiences in this study revealed that he felt the duration of content in podcasts uploaded on YouTube was too long. As a solution, the researcher suggested that Sasa create a short clip version by cutting important parts of the main content to be uploaded on platforms such as YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and TikTok. This strategy allows Sasa to reach

audiences who prefer short, to-the-point content, without ignoring the needs of audiences who still enjoy long-form content. This strategy can maintain the effectiveness of the promotion while still adapting to the audience's media consumption habits.

d. The interview results show that after watching this content, the audience became more aware of the existence of the Sasa brand and started to consider vetsin as a safe food ingredient. Some respondents also revealed that this promotion changed their perception of vetsin, from previously negative to more neutral or even positive.

Overall, this research proves that education-based soft selling communication strategy can be an effective method in building brand awareness and changing people's perception of a product. Brand Sasa has successfully utilized digital communication and the right media selection to create an emotional connection by providing educational value for its audience.

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