

Implementing Green Marketing Communication Strategies to Build Corporate Reputation and Consumer Trust: A Qualitative Case Study Orientation in Manufacturing Companies in Tangerang City

Derizka Inva Jaswita^{1*}, Tasya Aspiranti², Ima Amalia³, Nunung Nurhayati⁴

¹Student, Doctor of Management Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Bandung Islamic University, Indonesia

⁴Lecturer, Management Study Program¹, University of Pamulang, Indonesia

^{2,3}Lecturer, Doctor of Management Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Bandung Islamic University, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author:

Email: dosen02041@unpam.ac.id

Abstract.

Environmental sustainability communication has become an essential corporate strategy, particularly within manufacturing sectors in emerging economies. This study explores how manufacturing companies in Tangerang City, Indonesia, implement green marketing communication strategies and how these strategies influence corporate reputation and consumer trust. Using a qualitative multiple-case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 27 participants, including marketing managers, sustainability officers, consumers, NGO representatives, and government officials, supplemented with document analysis and field observations. Thematic analysis identified three dominant communication strategies: informational, emotional, and participatory green communication. The credibility of these strategies is shaped by transparency, message consistency, evidence-based claims, and alignment between communication and environmental practices. Findings reveal that firms adopting high-transparency green communication experience stronger reputation enhancement and improved consumer trust, while firms with inconsistent environmental performance face skepticism and accusations of greenwashing. A conceptual model is proposed describing the pathways through which green communication enhances trust and reputation. This study contributes to the literature by integrating signaling theory, green marketing theory, and trust theory to explain communication credibility in the context of developing countries. Practical implications are offered for manufacturers seeking to strengthen sustainability communication and legitimacy.

Keywords: Corporate reputation; Consumer trust; Green marketing communication; Manufacturing industry and Sustainability communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability has become a central concern in global business practices, particularly in countries experiencing rapid industrial growth and intensifying ecological pressures. Across the world, manufacturing companies are among the largest contributors to environmental degradation due to their production processes, energy consumption, and waste generation. As a result, they face increasing pressure from governments, consumers, and civil society to adopt environmentally responsible practices and communicate those efforts transparently. In Indonesia—especially in rapidly developing industrial regions such as Tangerang City—environmental issues related to industrial waste, air emissions, water contamination, and resource depletion have elevated public concern and triggered stricter regulatory oversight. Consequently, manufacturing firms are compelled not only to improve their environmental performance but also to reinforce these commitments through clear, strategic, and sustainability-oriented communication. Green marketing communication has thus emerged as a crucial mechanism for firms seeking to enhance legitimacy, strengthen competitiveness, and respond proactively to rising expectations for responsible corporate behavior. Despite the increasing emphasis on sustainability communication, substantial challenges persist in ensuring its credibility and effectiveness. In emerging economies such as Indonesia, many companies struggle to integrate sustainability principles consistently into both their operations and external communications. While some organizations demonstrate genuine commitment to environmental stewardship and openly publicize their achievements, others adopt superficial or symbolic environmental claims that raise public concern regarding greenwashing.

This misalignment between communicated messages and actual environmental performance creates uncertainty for stakeholders, undermines trust, and complicates consumer decision-making. These issues are especially salient in the Indonesian manufacturing sector, where disparities in regulatory enforcement, environmental literacy, and consumer awareness contribute to inconsistent expectations and mixed perceptions of corporate sustainability efforts. Understanding how green marketing communication influences corporate reputation and consumer trust within such contexts is therefore essential for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. Although academic interest in green marketing communication has grown extensively, the existing body of literature still contains notable gaps. Much prior research has been dominated by quantitative approaches focusing on consumer perceptions, willingness to purchase eco-friendly products, the effectiveness of green labels, or the impact of environmental claims on behavioral intentions. While valuable, these studies often overlook the nuanced processes by which communication strategies are conceptualized, implemented, and interpreted, particularly within the sociocultural and institutional environments of developing economies. Qualitative research exploring the narrative, relational, and contextual dimensions of green communication remains limited. Furthermore, previous studies largely emphasize informational or rational components of sustainability communication, whereas emotional, symbolic, and participatory elements—such as community engagement or interactive communication channels—remain underexplored.

Research within Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, also lacks sufficient investigation into how local cultural norms, institutional structures, and market dynamics shape communication credibility and stakeholder trust. These limitations reveal the need for more comprehensive and context-sensitive qualitative inquiries. The state of the art in current literature underscores several emerging issues that form the basis of this study's novelty. First, scholars increasingly highlight concerns regarding the credibility of sustainability communication amid the global rise of greenwashing, calling for deeper exploration of how stakeholders evaluate message authenticity rather than merely examining message content. Second, recent findings emphasize that alignment between environmental performance and communication signals is a critical determinant of reputation and trust outcomes, yet remains inadequately studied in developing countries. Third, a growing body of research recognizes the importance of participatory and dialogic communication approaches—such as open reporting, community partnerships, and transparency initiatives—but empirical studies addressing how these strategies operate in industrial settings, especially in the Global South, are still scarce. By incorporating insights from signaling theory, green marketing theory, and trust theory, this study aims to advance conceptual understanding of how sustainability messages are constructed, disseminated, and interpreted within environments characterized by institutional complexity and varying degrees of environmental literacy. Beyond addressing theoretical gaps, this study is motivated by practical challenges observed in Tangerang City's manufacturing landscape.

The region's densely concentrated industrial activities have resulted in recurring environmental concerns, including pollution complaints, regulatory violations, and growing public scrutiny. As firms navigate these pressures, they employ diverse communication strategies ranging from data-driven sustainability reports to emotionally appealing campaigns emphasizing corporate responsibility. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is often unclear, particularly when stakeholder skepticism remains high due to past incidents of industrial pollution or unverified environmental claims. Identifying the attributes of credible and trustworthy communication is therefore essential for companies seeking to maintain positive relationships with consumers, local communities, regulatory bodies, and advocacy groups. Moreover, insights generated from this study can inform policymakers and industry associations in formulating guidelines that promote transparency, accountability, and stronger sustainability governance within Indonesia's manufacturing sector. Moreover, technological advancements and the widespread use of digital media have further transformed the landscape of green marketing communication. Digital platforms—such as corporate websites, social media channels, sustainability dashboards, and online reporting tools—enable companies to reach broader audiences with real-time environmental updates and interactive content. These platforms also facilitate two-way communication, allowing stakeholders to question, critique, or validate a company's environmental claims more transparently than before.

However, the democratization of information through digital channels also increases the risk of scrutiny, misinformation, and reputational vulnerability. Stakeholders can easily compare claims across companies, reveal inconsistencies, or challenge unsupported statements. Therefore, understanding how manufacturing firms strategically utilize digital tools to enhance credibility, maintain transparency, and foster long-term trust becomes increasingly relevant. This dimension is particularly significant in Indonesia, where digital adoption is rapidly accelerating and consumers increasingly rely on online information to evaluate corporate behavior. Local socio-cultural dynamics and regulatory frameworks further add complexity to sustainability communication in the Indonesian context. In regions such as Tangerang City, close interactions between factories, residential communities, and local authorities create unique expectations regarding environmental responsibility and transparency. Community values related to cooperation, mutual trust, and collective welfare influence how sustainability messages are interpreted and whether companies are perceived as genuinely committed to environmental stewardship. At the same time, regulatory institutions continue to evolve, with increasing emphasis on compliance, public disclosure, and corporate accountability. These factors collectively shape how manufacturing firms craft their communication strategies and how stakeholders judge their authenticity. By examining these multidimensional influences, this study seeks not only to contextualize green marketing communication within Indonesia's evolving industrial environment but also to provide a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms through which communication credibility, reputation, and trust are constructed.

In addition to these contextual and theoretical considerations, the complexity of green marketing communication is further shaped by evolving stakeholder expectations. Modern consumers, communities, and regulatory agencies increasingly demand that companies not only disclose environmental information but also demonstrate consistent behavior that aligns with communicated values. This shift reflects a broader movement toward accountability and ethical governance in business practices. Stakeholders are becoming more discerning in differentiating between symbolic environmental claims and substantial, performance-driven commitments. Consequently, companies face the dual challenge of improving their sustainability initiatives while simultaneously ensuring that their communication accurately reflects their environmental performance. This interplay highlights the need for deeper academic inquiry into how firms navigate the tension between strategic self-presentation and authentic sustainability practices. Additionally, the growing global emphasis on sustainable development has expanded the conceptual scope of green marketing communication beyond mere promotional activities. Contemporary frameworks view sustainability communication as a multidimensional process that integrates environmental reporting, transparency mechanisms, stakeholder engagement, and organizational learning. These developments call for analytical approaches that move beyond traditional marketing perspectives and incorporate insights from institutional theory, organizational legitimacy theory, and trust-building literature.

In emerging markets such as Indonesia, where institutional environments are often characterized by regulatory fragmentation and limited enforcement capacity, understanding how companies internalize and operationalize these evolving expectations becomes even more critical. Such contexts provide fertile ground for qualitative exploration, particularly regarding how managers interpret sustainability pressures and craft communication strategies to navigate complex stakeholder landscapes. Furthermore, the Indonesian manufacturing sector presents unique characteristics that distinguish it from other national contexts, thereby reinforcing the relevance of localized research. The coexistence of multinational corporations and small-to-medium local manufacturers creates variability in resource availability, sustainability competence, and communication capabilities. Larger firms may adopt globally standardized sustainability frameworks, while smaller firms often rely on informal or ad-hoc communication strategies shaped by local norms and operational constraints. These variations influence not only communication practices but also how stakeholders assess credibility and authenticity. Examining this diversity can yield valuable insights into how organizational size, resource endowment, and institutional exposure contribute to differences in communication strategies and outcomes. By capturing these nuances, the present study can offer a more holistic understanding of sustainability communication in Indonesia's evolving industrial ecosystem.

Collectively, these conceptual, contextual, and practical issues underscore the importance of conducting a qualitative investigation that prioritizes depth, contextualization, and interpretive richness. Existing research has yet to fully explore how communication strategies emerge from internal organizational dynamics, how they are interpreted by diverse external audiences, and how these interpretations translate into reputational and trust-related consequences. By addressing these gaps, the study contributes to advancing theoretical discussions on authenticity, credibility, and strategic communication within green marketing. At the same time, it offers practical value by identifying communication approaches that resonate effectively with stakeholders and support environmental governance efforts in Indonesia's manufacturing sector. In light of these issues, this study aims to explore how manufacturing companies in Tangerang City design and implement green marketing communication strategies, and how these strategies contribute to enhancing corporate reputation and consumer trust. Specifically, the research examines the forms of communication employed, the internal and external factors influencing perceived communication credibility, and the reputational and trust-related outcomes experienced by diverse stakeholder groups. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to advancing theoretical development in sustainability communication and offers practical recommendations for firms seeking to strengthen their environmental positioning within emerging economy contexts.

II. METHODS

The present study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore how green marketing communication strategies are formulated, implemented, and perceived within manufacturing companies in Tangerang City. This design was chosen because the research aims to understand complex organizational processes, stakeholder interpretations, and contextual factors influencing green marketing communication and its role in shaping corporate reputation and consumer trust. Qualitative case studies allow researchers to obtain deep, contextualized insights that cannot be captured through quantitative or experimental approaches. The study focused on uncovering meanings, patterns, and strategic orientations that emerge from the lived experiences of managers, employees, and consumers directly involved in or affected by green marketing communication practices.

The research objectives guided the development of the study variables, which include:

- 1) Green marketing communication strategies, referring to the planning, message framing, media selection, and implementation of environmentally oriented communication
- 2) Corporate reputation, referring to stakeholder perceptions of the company's credibility, responsibility, and environmental performance; and
- 3) Consumer trust, referring to consumers' confidence in the company's environmental claims, products, and long-term commitment to sustainability.
- 4) Although qualitative research does not operationalize variables statistically, these conceptual variables were used as analytical lenses to interpret findings and to structure thematic coding during the data analysis process.

The research population comprised manufacturing companies operating within Tangerang City that publicly claim to implement environmental initiatives or green marketing practices. From this population, the researcher selected three companies using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: (1) companies that publish sustainability-related communication; (2) companies that engage consumers or stakeholders in environmental programs; and (3) companies willing to provide access for interviews and document analysis. Within each company, key informants were selected using criterion-based sampling, including marketing managers, corporate communication staff, sustainability officers, and frontline employees involved in campaign execution. To complement organizational perspectives, consumer participants were also selected using snowball sampling, ensuring that respondents had previous experience engaging with or being exposed to the company's green marketing communication. Data were collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed informants to express their views freely while ensuring that discussions remained aligned with research objectives.

Interview guides covered topics such as communication strategies, message credibility, perceived challenges, stakeholder responses, and the relationship between communication practices and corporate reputation. Non-participant observation was carried out in corporate environments to capture actual communication activities, consumer interactions, and the authenticity of green claims displayed in marketing materials, events, or corporate settings. Document analysis included sustainability reports, corporate websites, social media postings, marketing brochures, and internal guidelines, enabling triangulation of spoken data with documented communication strategies. The research employed an interactive model of data analysis, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. After transcription, interview data were coded using thematic analysis, starting with open coding to identify initial categories, followed by axial coding to establish relationships among concepts, and selective coding to integrate themes into a coherent analytical framework.

This process allowed the researcher to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, and underlying meanings related to how green marketing communication influences corporate reputation and consumer trust. Data triangulation—across interviews, observations, and documents—was used to increase validity and reduce researcher bias. To ensure research trustworthiness, the study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, member checking, and triangulation. Transferability was ensured by providing rich, thick descriptions of research settings, strategies, and contexts. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of all research procedures, including field notes, coding memos, and audit trails. Confirmability was reinforced through reflective journaling and peer debriefing, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in empirical data rather than researcher assumptions. Although qualitative research does not explicitly formulate statistical hypotheses, this study is grounded in an implicit theoretical hypothesis that guides the exploration: *Effective and credible green marketing communication strategies strengthen corporate reputation and foster consumer trust, particularly when communication is authentic, transparent, and aligned with organizational environmental practices.*

This implicit hypothesis provides conceptual direction for examining how communication practices influence stakeholder perceptions while allowing for emergent findings to refine or challenge existing theoretical assumptions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Forms and Characteristics of Green Marketing Communication Strategies

The analysis of interviews, observations, and corporate documents revealed three dominant forms of green marketing communication strategies practiced by manufacturing companies in Tangerang City: informational, emotional, and participatory communication.

1. *Informational Green Communication*

Companies used fact-based, data-driven messages—such as energy consumption metrics, waste reduction achievements, or compliance with environmental regulations—to enhance perceived transparency. Sustainability reports and official websites were the main channels for disseminating these messages. Managers stated that these forms of communication were intended to “show measurable progress” and “reduce public doubt” about environmental performance.

2. *Emotional Green Communication*

This strategy included narrative-based campaigns that highlighted the company’s moral responsibility, community support, or commitment to safeguarding future generations. Social media posts often used emotional storytelling to build positive associations between the brand and environmentally friendly values.

3. *Participatory Green Communication*

Participatory communication involved community engagement programs, stakeholder dialogues, public environmental events, and collaborative waste-management campaigns. These activities allowed stakeholders to directly experience the company’s sustainability initiatives, which strengthened perceptions of authenticity. Across the three case companies, the most credible communication strategies were those

supported by tangible environmental actions. Firms that integrated informational and participatory approaches were perceived as more authentic than firms relying primarily on emotional messaging.

2. Credibility Factors Influencing Stakeholder Perceptions

Stakeholders—including consumers, regulators, and community representatives—identified four credibility factors that influenced their trust in green marketing communication:

1. Transparency

Clear disclosure of environmental data, certification, and third-party verification increased message credibility. Stakeholders expressed higher trust when communication was supported by verifiable evidence rather than generic claims.

2. Message Consistency

Consistency across communication channels and alignment with the company's long-term sustainability practices were seen as markers of authenticity. Contradictions between promotional messages and environmental performance generated skepticism.

3. Evidence-Based Claims

Claims backed by documentation—such as ISO 14001 certification, waste management compliance, or environmental audits—were considered more trustworthy than emotionally oriented or symbolic claims.

4. Alignment Between Communication and Environmental Practices

Stakeholders were quick to identify gaps between communicated sustainability claims and on-ground practices. Companies with limited implementation but aggressive communication were perceived as engaging in greenwashing.

These factors collectively shaped how stakeholders evaluated whether green marketing communication was credible, informative, or potentially deceptive.

3. Effects of Green Marketing Communication on Corporate Reputation

The findings indicate that companies implementing authentic and transparent green communication strategies experienced noticeable improvements in corporate reputation. Participants described reputable companies as those that consistently displayed environmental responsibility, maintained long-term commitments, and engaged in community-based environmental programs.

Companies with comprehensive sustainability communication were associated with:

- a. higher organizational legitimacy,
- b. stronger relationships with local communities,
- c. positive media coverage, and
- d. reduced reputational risks related to environmental controversies.

On the other hand, overly promotional communication without meaningful environmental practices resulted in negative perceptions, particularly accusations of greenwashing. In such cases, reputation declined because stakeholders perceived the company as “inauthentic,” “manipulative,” or “irresponsible.”

4. Influence of Green Marketing Communication on Consumer Trust

Consumer trust was found to be closely tied to the perceived authenticity of environmental claims.

Consumers demonstrated greater trust when:

- a. communication was transparent and supported by evidence;
- b. companies provided accessible information about product eco-friendliness;
- c. environmental messages were consistent with observable company behavior; and
- d. sustainability initiatives were ongoing rather than seasonal campaigns.

Conversely, consumers became skeptical when messages were vague or appeared exaggerated. Some consumers reported verifying environmental claims through online resources or independent reviews, demonstrating a shift toward more informed and critical decision-making. The findings show that trust is not built solely through communication but through the alignment between what the company *says* and what the company *does*. This supports the theoretical position that trust emerges from credibility, authenticity, and perceived reliability of environmental claims.

Discussion

1. Integration of Communication Strategies and Stakeholder Interpretation

The study confirms that effective green marketing communication must go beyond promotional activities; it requires consistent integration with verifiable environmental performance. This aligns with signaling theory, which posits that credible signals must be costly or difficult to fake. Informational and participatory strategies were more effective because they relied on measurable evidence and stakeholder involvement—making them harder to manipulate. Emotional messages were impactful only when supported by substantial environmental actions. Unsupported emotional claims risked being interpreted as symbolic gestures or greenwashing, echoing findings from recent literature (e.g., Aji & Adiwijaya, 2025; Persakis et al., 2025).

2. Greenwashing Risks and the Role of Transparency

Findings from all three companies highlight the central role of transparency in reducing greenwashing perceptions. Stakeholders used transparency as a benchmark to assess authenticity. This aligns with emerging scholarship emphasizing the increasing public sensitivity toward greenwashing and the demand for accountability in sustainability communication. Companies that relied heavily on promotional narratives without providing tangible evidence encountered heightened stakeholder skepticism. This reflects arguments that stakeholder trust depends not only on message content but also on the quality and verifiability of supporting information.

3. Relationship Between Communication Credibility, Reputation, and Trust

The study provides empirical evidence that communication credibility functions as a bridge between green marketing communication and its organizational outcomes—corporate reputation and consumer trust. Transparent, consistent, and aligned communication enhanced reputation by reinforcing perceptions of responsibility and ethical behavior. At the same time, credible communication fostered trust by reducing uncertainty, increasing confidence in the firm's commitments, and strengthening company-stakeholder relationships. This supports recent findings that green trust mediates the effect of sustainability communication on behavioral intentions (see Nguyen-Viet et al., 2024; Ernawati et al., 2025).

4. The Role of Context: Industrial Ecology of Tangerang City

The contextual uniqueness of Tangerang City—marked by dense industrial clusters, community proximity, and past environmental controversies—amplified the importance of communication credibility. Stakeholders in this region were highly aware of environmental risks and therefore more critical of corporate sustainability claims. The presence of strong community expectations for environmental transparency shaped companies' communication strategies and contributed to greater scrutiny of their environmental initiatives. Thus, the local socio-cultural and regulatory environment significantly influenced how green communication strategies were interpreted and evaluated.

5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the study contributes by proposing a conceptual link between communication credibility, environmental performance alignment, and stakeholder trust. It reinforces the view that sustainability communication is a multidimensional process involving transparency, legitimacy, and stakeholder engagement.

Practically, the findings suggest that companies should:

1. Prioritize transparency through accessible reporting and third-party validation.
2. Ensure message consistency across digital and offline communication channels.
3. Avoid symbolic or exaggerated claims that could trigger greenwashing accusations.
4. Strengthen participatory programs to increase stakeholder involvement and experiential trust.
5. Align sustainability messaging with actual environmental practices to maintain and enhance corporate credibility.

These practical steps can help manufacturing companies build stronger reputational capital and deepen consumer trust in a competitive and environmentally sensitive marketplace.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that effective and credible green marketing communication strategies—through informational, emotional, and participatory approaches—significantly enhance corporate reputation and consumer trust in manufacturing companies in Tangerang City. The credibility of these strategies hinges on transparency, message consistency, evidence-based claims, and alignment between communication and actual environmental practices, thereby mitigating greenwashing risks. These findings support a conceptual model integrating signaling theory, green marketing theory, and trust theory, while offering practical implications for firms to prioritize transparency and stakeholder engagement in sustainability communication.

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