



Strategic Health Communication and Digital Business Transformation in the Halal Supplement Industry: Evidence from an Indonesian SME

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Abstract. The global halal pharmaceutical and health supplement industry is experiencing rapid digital transformation, requiring companies to develop not only product competitiveness but also strategic communication capabilities capable of strengthening consumer trust and health literacy. This study aims to analyse the strategic positioning and business development strategy of PT VitaBrain Indonesia, a halal brain health supplement company producing *Centella asiatica*-based products, through the integration of SWOT analysis, the Internal-External (IE) Matrix, and strategic health communication perspectives. This study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods case study approach using semi-structured interviews, digital observations, and source triangulation involving company management, distributor agents, and loyal consumers. Internal and external strategic factors were analysed using IFAS–EFAS matrices, IE Matrix positioning, and TOWS strategic formulation. The findings indicate that PT VitaBrain Indonesia is positioned within Quadrant V (“Hold and Maintain”) with an IFAS score of 2.71 and an EFAS score of 2.57. The study reveals that the company’s primary challenge does not originate from product legitimacy or quality limitations, but rather from insufficient digital communication capability, declining conventional distribution effectiveness, and increasing digital misinformation threats. The results further demonstrate that strategic health communication functions as a critical organizational capability capable of strengthening health literacy, digital trust, consumer engagement, and sustainable competitiveness within digital halal healthcare markets. Theoretically, this study contributes to the strategic management and health communication literature by extending the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Health Belief Model (HBM) into the context of halal digital healthcare SMEs. The study proposes that strategic health communication should be conceptualized as an intangible strategic asset capable of supporting sustainable business transformation within highly competitive digital marketplaces.

Keywords: Consumer Trust; Digital Business Transformation; Halal Supplement Industry; Health Literacy; Strategic Health Communication.

1. BACKGROUND

The global halal market has transcended its traditional boundaries of food and beverages, expanding significantly into the pharmaceutical and health supplement sectors. In Indonesia, the integration of halal certification with herbal-based health products has become a critical competitive advantage. *Centella asiatica*, a medicinal herb widely recognized for its neuroprotective and cognitive-enhancing properties, has seen a surge in commercial demand. PT VitaBrain Indonesia, established in 2008, operates within this niche, producing "Vitabrain VB Centella" a standardized 400 mg supplement certified by the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority (BPOM). Despite having a certified and proven product, companies in the halal supplement sector face intense market dynamics, including aggressive pricing, the proliferation of counterfeit products, and shifting consumer behaviour toward digital purchasing channels.

To navigate this, traditional marketing is no longer sufficient; companies must bridge the health literacy gap through strategic health communication. Effectively translating clinical benefits into accessible consumer knowledge is paramount to building trust. Despite the rapid expansion of the halal pharmaceutical and supplement industry, existing studies have predominantly focused on halal supply chains, halal consumer behaviour, and certification mechanisms, while limited attention has been given to the strategic transformation of halal health supplement SMEs operating within digitally disrupted markets. More specifically, previous studies rarely examine how strategic health communication functions as an intangible competitive resource capable of strengthening digital consumer trust, health literacy, and market sustainability simultaneously.

Furthermore, prior strategic management studies employing SWOT and IE Matrix frameworks often remain overly descriptive and financially oriented, with minimal integration of communication-based strategic variables such as consumer health literacy, digital misinformation resistance, and evidence-based health messaging. This creates an important theoretical gap because, within digital health commerce, consumer purchasing behaviour is increasingly influenced not only by product quality and price competition, but also by the credibility, transparency, and educational quality of health-related communication.

Grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Health Belief Model (HBM), this study proposes that strategic health communication should be conceptualized as a strategic organizational capability rather than merely a promotional activity. Therefore, this study contributes to the strategic management and health communication literature by integrating digital health literacy variables into the SWOT–IE Matrix strategic formulation process for halal supplement SMEs.

This study specifically investigates PT VitaBrain Indonesia as a representative case of a halal supplement company transitioning from traditional agent-based distribution toward digitally driven health communication strategies. By integrating strategic management analysis with health communication theory, this study offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding how halal SMEs can maintain competitiveness, consumer trust, and business sustainability in highly competitive digital marketplaces. Unlike previous halal business studies that primarily emphasize operational supply chains, certification systems, or consumer religiosity, this study introduces a strategic communication-oriented perspective by positioning health communication capability as a measurable strategic organizational resource within halal supplement SMEs.

The novelty of this study lies in three major contributions. First, the study integrates strategic health communication variables into the SWOT–IE Matrix strategic formulation framework, which has rarely been explored in halal healthcare business research. Second, the study conceptualizes consumer health literacy and digital trust as strategic intangible assets capable of influencing sustainable competitive advantage within digital marketplaces. Third, the study extends the application of the Health Belief Model (HBM) beyond public health campaigns into strategic business communication and digital consumer engagement contexts. Accordingly, this research offers a more interdisciplinary framework connecting strategic management, digital marketing, health communication, and halal business sustainability within the rapidly evolving digital healthcare ecosystem.

This study contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, it extends strategic management research within halal healthcare SMEs by integrating strategic health communication into the SWOT–IE Matrix strategic formulation framework. Second, the study conceptualizes communication capability, consumer health literacy, and digital trust formation as strategic intangible resources capable of influencing long-term business sustainability within digital marketplaces. Third, the study expands the application of the Health Belief Model (HBM) beyond traditional public health campaigns into the context of strategic business communication and digital consumer engagement within halal-oriented healthcare industries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal Industry Competitiveness and Brand Trust

Strategic management within SMEs requires a rigorous alignment of internal capabilities with external market dynamics, a concept deeply rooted in the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm (Barney, 2001). The formulation of such strategies relies on robust analytical tools. The SWOT matrix synthesizes internal (Strengths, Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities, Threats) factors, while the Internal-External (IE) Matrix quantifies these variables into an actionable grid based on the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) and External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) (David & David, 2021). The IE Matrix divides strategies into three major domains: Grow and Build, Hold and Maintain, and Harvest or Divest. Organizations positioned in the "Average-Medium" intersect (Quadrant V) typically employ "Hold and Maintain" strategies. In contemporary turbulent markets, this positioning dictates a focus on market penetration and targeted product enhancement rather than aggressive, high-risk diversification (David & David, 2021).

Communication Capability and Strategic Adaptation in Digital SMEs

Digital transformation has fundamentally altered how SMEs compete within increasingly dynamic and platform-based marketplaces. Beyond operational efficiency and product quality, organizations are now required to develop adaptive communication capabilities capable of strengthening consumer trust, digital engagement, and long-term market sustainability. Within digital healthcare ecosystems, communication capability functions not merely as a promotional instrument but as a strategic organizational resource that supports consumer education, credibility formation, and resistance toward misinformation. SMEs operating in health-related industries increasingly depend on transparent, evidence-based, and consumer-oriented communication strategies to maintain competitiveness in highly fragmented digital environments.

Strategic adaptation therefore requires organizations to integrate digital transformation with communication responsiveness, health literacy development, and trust-building mechanisms. In this context, competitive advantage is increasingly determined not only by tangible product superiority but also by the organization's ability to translate complex health information into accessible and credible consumer knowledge.

Digital Transformation and the SME Marketing Capability Gap

The accelerated shift toward e-commerce necessitates advanced digital marketing and communication capabilities. However, many SMEs experience a “digital capabilities gap,” wherein they possess superior physical products but lack the technical and strategic communication competencies required to navigate digital algorithms, consumer engagement dynamics, and marketplace competition (Herhausen et al., 2020). Within digital marketing ecosystems, organizational capability to manage digital engagement, communication effectiveness, and data-driven marketing adaptation has become a critical determinant of SME competitiveness. In highly competitive e-commerce environments, merely deploying digital advertisements is insufficient to sustain long-term consumer trust and market performance. SMEs increasingly require integrated digital communication strategies capable of combining consumer education, transparent messaging, and trust-building mechanisms to remain competitive within fragmented digital marketplaces.

Furthermore, maintaining digital brand integrity is increasingly challenged by the proliferation of counterfeit products and misleading health information across online marketplaces, requiring companies to strengthen communication transparency and consumer trust-building strategies (Attaran et al., 2012).

Strategic Health Communication in Business Development

Health communication is defined as the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health outcomes (Schiavo, 2013). In the context of commercial health supplements, strategic health communication transcends traditional advertising; it acts as an educational differentiator. Grounded in the Health Belief Model (HBM), effective communication must articulate the consumer's perceived susceptibility (e.g., cognitive decline) and the perceived benefits of the intervention (e.g., *Centella asiatica*) to trigger a purchase action (Kreps, 2021). By elevating consumer health literacy, companies can shift the competitive paradigm from price-based rivalries to value- and evidence-based purchasing decisions. Furthermore, clear health communication is the most effective strategic defense against digital health misinformation and unsubstantiated claims made by counterfeit competitors (Finset et al., 2021).

The integration of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Health Belief Model (HBM) provides a complementary theoretical foundation for understanding strategic communication capability within digital halal healthcare markets. While RBV explains how communication capability functions as an intangible organizational resource capable of generating sustainable competitive advantage, HBM explains the psychological mechanisms through which health-related communication influences consumer perceptions, trust formation, and behavioral intention.

Within the context of halal supplement SMEs, strategic health communication therefore operates simultaneously at both organizational and consumer levels. At the organizational level, communication capability strengthens digital competitiveness and market differentiation. At the consumer level, evidence-based health communication shapes perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, and trust toward halal-certified healthcare products. Consequently, the integration of RBV and HBM enables this study to explain how communication capability contributes not only to organizational sustainability but also to consumer behavioral engagement within digital healthcare ecosystems.

Conceptual Framework

This study proposes a conceptual integration between strategic health communication and sustainable business development within the halal supplement industry. The framework is grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV), which positions organizational communication capability as a strategic intangible asset, and the Health Belief Model (HBM), which explains how health-related perceptions influence consumer behavior.

In the context of digital health commerce, strategic health communication functions not merely as a promotional instrument but as a mechanism for increasing consumer health literacy, strengthening trust, reducing misinformation vulnerability, and improving long-term consumer engagement. Consequently, companies capable of delivering transparent, evidence-based, and educational health communication possess a stronger competitive advantage in highly saturated digital marketplaces. The framework assumes that effective strategic health communication positively influences consumer health literacy and perceived credibility.

These factors subsequently strengthen consumer trust and digital engagement, ultimately contributing to purchase intention, brand sustainability, and long-term competitive resilience. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes strategic health communication as a mediating strategic capability connecting organizational resources, digital marketing effectiveness, and sustainable competitive advantage in the halal supplement industry.

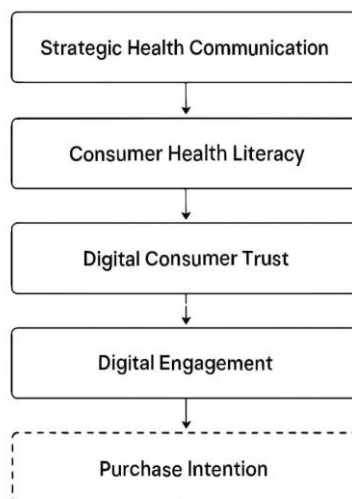


Figure 1: illustrates the relationship between strategic health communication, health literacy, digital trust, and sustainable business performance within the halal supplement industry.

Research Propositions

Based on the integration of the Resource-Based View (RBV), Health Belief Model (HBM), and strategic health communication literature, this study proposes several conceptual relationships that may guide future empirical research within the halal supplement industry.

Proposition 1 : Strategic health communication positively influences consumer health literacy within digital halal supplement markets.

Proposition 2 : Higher levels of consumer health literacy strengthen consumer trust toward halal-certified health supplement brands.

Proposition 3 : Evidence-based health communication positively affects digital consumer engagement and purchase intention.

Proposition 4 : Digital trust mediates the relationship between strategic health communication and sustainable business performance.

Proposition 5 : The integration of halal legitimacy, BPOM certification, and transparent health communication strengthens competitive resilience against counterfeit products and digital misinformation.

These propositions provide a conceptual foundation for future quantitative and longitudinal studies examining the role of strategic communication capability in shaping sustainable competitive advantage within the digital halal healthcare ecosystem.

3. METHOD

The mixed-methods approach was selected to enable a more comprehensive understanding of both measurable strategic positioning and underlying organizational communication dynamics. While qualitative interviews provided in-depth insights into managerial perceptions, consumer trust formation, and communication challenges, the quantitative IFAS–EFAS scoring system allowed the study to systematically evaluate strategic positioning and organizational competitiveness within the halal supplement industry.

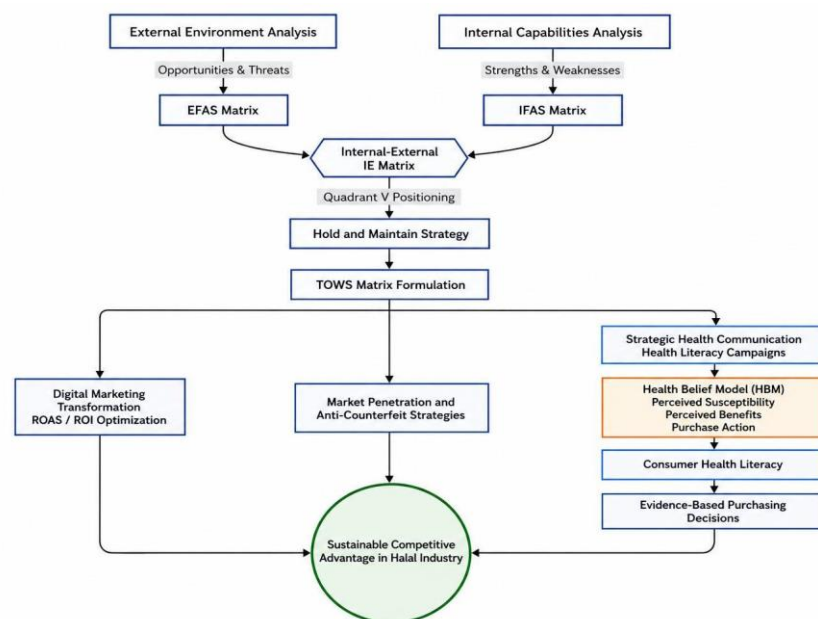


Figure 2. Strategic Health Communication and Business Development Framework in the Halal Supplement Industry

Research Design

A qualitative-dominant approach was selected because the study primarily explores strategic organizational dynamics, communication capability development, consumer trust formation, and digital transformation processes within the halal healthcare ecosystem. Quantitative strategic scoring through IFAS–EFAS matrices and IE Matrix positioning was employed to support strategic interpretation and organizational positioning analysis, digital communication effectiveness, and market perceptions. The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of PT VitaBrain Indonesia as a representative company operating in Indonesia’s rapidly growing halal health supplement sector.

The study adopted an exploratory strategic analysis framework by integrating SWOT analysis, IFAS–EFAS matrices, the Internal-External (IE) Matrix, and the TOWS Matrix to formulate sustainable business strategies supported by health communication theory.

Data Collection

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to strengthen analytical rigor and reduce single-source bias.

Secondary data were collected through structured digital observations of: a. The company’s official website, b. E-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia and Shopee, c. Social media channels, d. Online customer reviews, e. Digital advertising activities, and f. Health communication content related to halal certification, BPOM legitimacy, and consumer education.

Primary qualitative data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in May 2026. Interviews focused on strategic management, digital marketing practices, consumer perceptions, and the effectiveness of health communication campaigns. To improve the credibility and validity of findings, this research employed source triangulation by comparing information derived from managerial, distributor, consumer, and digital platform perspectives (Hair et al., 2023).

Informants and Sampling Technique

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement, expertise, and experience related to the company’s strategic operations and product consumption. Interviews were conducted until thematic saturation was achieved, ensuring sufficient depth and consistency of findings. The key informants included:

Table 1: The inclusion of multiple stakeholder perspectives enhanced the objectivity of the IFAS and EFAS factor identification process.

Informant	Position/Role	Research Purpose
I1	Owner of PT VitaBrain Indonesia	Understanding corporate vision, strategic challenges, and financial sustainability
I2	Digital Marketing Manager	Evaluating digital marketing capability, ROAS/ROI performance, and health campaign strategies
I3–I4	Active Distributor Agents	Identifying distribution barriers, counterfeit competition, and consumer market dynamics
I5–I9	Loyal Consumers	Exploring consumer trust, perceived product efficacy, and health communication clarity

Data Analysis Technique

The qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis procedures consisting of: (1) Data transcription, (2) Open coding, (3) Category identification, (4) Theme development, and (5) Interpretation of strategic communication patterns.

The strategic analysis process was conducted in three sequential stages:

Input Stage

Internal and external strategic factors were identified from interview findings and secondary digital observations. These factors formed the basis of the IFAS (Internal Factors Analysis Summary) and EFAS (External Factors Analysis Summary) matrices.

Matching Stage

Each factor was assigned a weight ranging from 0.0 to 1.0 according to its relative strategic importance, while ratings ranging from 1 to 4 were used to evaluate organizational response effectiveness. The total weighted scores were subsequently mapped into the Internal-External (IE) Matrix to determine the company's strategic position.

Decision Stage

Based on the IE Matrix positioning, a TOWS Matrix was developed to formulate strategic recommendations. The strategic formulation integrated health communication principles and the Health Belief Model (HBM), particularly regarding perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, and consumer purchase behavior in the halal supplement market.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure research credibility and trustworthiness, this study applied several validation techniques, including: (1) source triangulation, (2) cross-validation between interview and digital observation findings, (3) member checking with selected informants, and (4) comparative analysis across stakeholder groups.

These procedures enhanced analytical consistency and minimized subjective interpretation bias.

Strategic Weighting and Scoring Procedure

To improve analytical rigor and minimize subjectivity in the SWOT-based strategic assessment, this study employed a structured weighting and scoring procedure during the IFAS and EFAS matrix formulation stages. The identification of internal and external strategic factors was conducted through thematic coding of interview transcripts and digital observations. Factors that consistently emerged across multiple stakeholder groups were prioritized as strategic variables. The weighting process was subsequently carried out using expert judgment involving the principal researcher and managerial informants from PT VitaBrain Indonesia, including the owner and digital marketing manager. Each strategic factor was assigned a weight ranging from 0.0 to 1.0 based on its relative influence on organizational sustainability and competitive positioning within the halal supplement market. The cumulative weights for internal and external factors each totaled 1.00. Ratings were then assigned using a four-point scale to evaluate the company's strategic response effectiveness toward each factor, where: (1) major weakness/threat response, (2) minor weakness/threat response, (3) moderate strength/opportunity response, (4) major strength/opportunity response.

To enhance consistency, cross-validation was conducted between interview findings, digital marketplace observations, social media evaluations, and organizational documents. The final IFAS and EFAS scores were generated by multiplying factor weights by corresponding ratings, following the strategic management framework proposed by David and David (2021). This structured procedure strengthens the reliability of the SWOT–IE Matrix positioning and reduces the risk of purely subjective strategic interpretation.

Ethical Consideration

All participants voluntarily agreed to participate in this research prior to the interview process. Informants were informed about the academic purpose of the study, and all responses were treated confidentially and used solely for research purposes. No sensitive personal data were disclosed, and all participants provided informed consent prior to the interview process.

Following the methodological procedures described above, the study identified several strategic internal and external factors influencing the digital competitiveness and communication capability of PT VitaBrain Indonesia. The findings below present the results of the SWOT–IE Matrix analysis alongside the broader strategic implications for digital health communication and halal healthcare business sustainability.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Internal and External Factor Analysis

PT VitaBrain's core strengths include its established operational history, strict legal compliance, and scientifically backed formulation. However, weaknesses manifest in declining distribution agents, decreasing sales volume, and a critical lack of targeted health communication strategies to optimize digital marketing for non-pediatric segments. Externally, the opportunities include rising health literacy and unexploited demographics (adults/elderly). hreats include aggressive price competition and digital health misinformation spread by counterfeiters.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis Framework of PT VitaBrain Indonesia

STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Official legal compliance (BPOM & Halal Cert)• Proven product quality (<i>Centella asiatica</i>)• Strong brand legacy (since 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declining distribution agents• Lack of advanced digital marketing skills• Decreasing sales volume
OPPORTUNITIES (O)	THREATS (T)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unexploited demographics (Adults, Elderly)• Increasing demand for natural supplements• Rapid e-commerce growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proliferation of counterfeit products• Aggressive price competition• Digital health misinformation

The SWOT findings indicate that PT VitaBrain Indonesia is currently experiencing a strategic transitional phase characterized by a mismatch between strong product legitimacy and relatively weak digital communication capability. Although the company possesses strong institutional trust indicators through BPOM legality, halal certification, and long-term brand experience, these strengths have not yet been fully transformed into sustainable digital market dominance.

The analysis demonstrates that the company's primary vulnerability does not originate from product quality limitations, but rather from insufficient digital communication adaptation and declining effectiveness of conventional distribution mechanisms. This finding reflects a broader structural transformation occurring within the halal healthcare industry, where competitive advantage increasingly depends on the integration of digital communication capability, consumer education, and trust-building strategies.

Furthermore, the external environment reveals that rising consumer health literacy simultaneously creates both opportunities and strategic pressure for halal supplement SMEs. Consumers are becoming increasingly selective toward evidence-based health products, forcing companies to compete not only through pricing strategies but also through communication credibility and scientific transparency.

The findings also suggest that digital misinformation and counterfeit products function not merely as operational threats, but as communication-based market disruptions capable of eroding consumer trust and weakening brand legitimacy. Consequently, strategic health communication emerges as a defensive and competitive organizational capability rather than solely a promotional marketing tool.

Table 3. Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS)

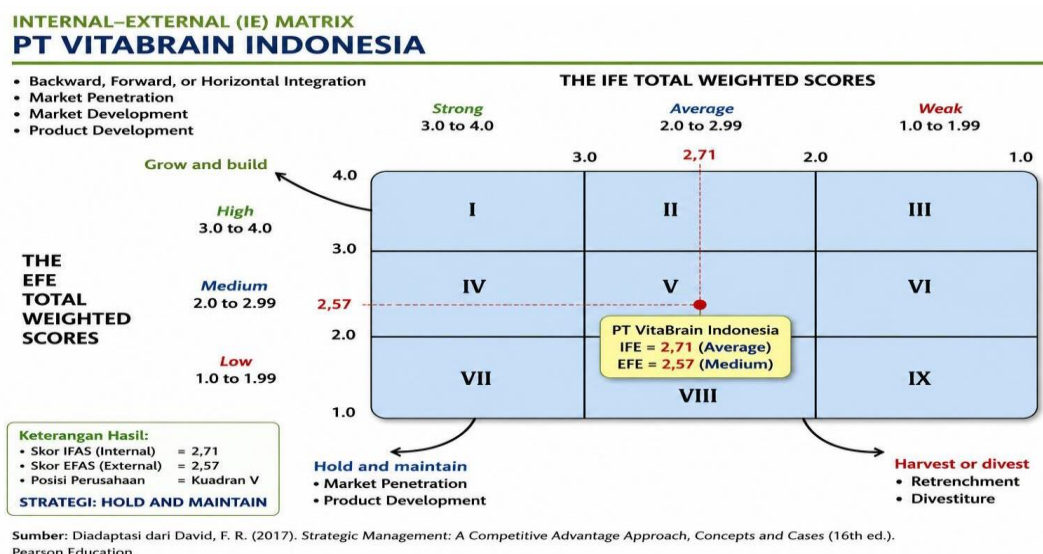
Internal Strategic Factors	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
Strengths (S)			
S1. Official legal compliance (BPOM) and Halal Certification	0.20	4	0.80
S2. Proven product quality using natural <i>Centella asiatica</i>	0.16	3	0.48
S3. Strong organizational legacy and brand experience (since 2008)	0.15	3	0.45
Weaknesses (W)			
W1. Declining number of active distribution agents	0.20	2	0.40
W2. Lack of advanced digital marketing skills & targeted health communication	0.15	2	0.30
W3. Decreasing overall sales volume in the recent period	0.14	2	0.28
Total IFAS Score	1.00		2.71

Table 4. External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS)

External Strategic Factors	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
Opportunities (O)			
O1. Rising health literacy & unexploited broader demographics (adults, elderly)	0.13	4	0.52
O2. Increasing global demand for halal and natural health supplements	0.16	3	0.48
O3. Rapid growth of e-commerce and digital marketplace integration	0.15	3	0.45
Threats (T)			
T1. Counterfeit products & digital health misinformation in marketplaces	0.20	2	0.40
T2. Emergence of new competitors with similar herbal formulations	0.20	2	0.40
T3. Aggressive price wars among supplement brands	0.16	2	0.32
Total EFAS Score	1.00		2.57

Internal-External (IE) Matrix Positioning

The quantitative assessment resulted in an IFAS Score of 2.71 (Average) and an EFAS Score of 2.57 (Medium). Plotting these scores on the IE Matrix places PT VitaBrain Indonesia precisely in Quadrant V.

**Figure 3.** Internal-External (IE) Matrix Positioning of PT VitaBrain Indonesia

Strategic Implications: Hold and Maintain

The positioning of PT VitaBrain Indonesia within Quadrant V indicates that the company currently operates in a relatively stable yet strategically vulnerable position. Although the company possesses strong institutional legitimacy through BPOM certification, halal compliance, and long-standing brand experience, interview findings reveal that these advantages have not yet been effectively transformed into sustainable digital competitiveness. This condition was particularly emphasized by the Digital Marketing Manager (I2), who stated that “digital advertising alone is insufficient because consumers increasingly require educational content and scientific explanations before making purchasing decisions.” This finding demonstrates that contemporary halal supplement consumers are becoming more dependent on informational transparency and evidence-based communication rather than conventional promotional persuasion alone.

The findings further reveal the existence of a substantial digital communication capability gap within the organization. The declining effectiveness of traditional distributor networks reflects broader structural changes occurring within digital marketplaces, where SMEs increasingly depend on digital engagement capability, consumer trust formation, and communication responsiveness to maintain competitiveness. This finding supports Herhausen et al. (2020), who argue that SMEs experiencing digital capability limitations often struggle to convert strong product legitimacy into sustainable market performance.

From a strategic communication perspective, the findings suggest that health communication functions not merely as a marketing activity, but as a strategic organizational mechanism capable of reducing misinformation vulnerability, strengthening digital trust, and supporting long-term consumer engagement. Consequently, the “Hold and Maintain” strategy identified through the IE Matrix should not be interpreted as passive market maintenance, but rather as an adaptive strategic repositioning process centered on digital communication transformation and consumer education.

Table 5. TOWS Matrix Formulation for PT VitaBrain Indonesia

	Strengths (S) S1. BPOM & Halal Cert S2. Quality <i>Centella asiatica</i> S3. Brand Legacy (Since 2008)	Weaknesses (W) W1. Declining agents W2. Weak digital marketing & health comms W3. Dropping sales volume
Opportunities (O) O1. Adult/Elderly market O2. Halal supplement demand O3. E-commerce growth	SO Strategies (Max-Max) 1. Health Literacy Repositioning: Leverage the BPOM certification (S1) to launch evidence-based health communication campaigns targeting adult and elderly segments via e-commerce (O1, O3). 2. Halal Educational Expansion: Emphasize the clinical benefits of <i>Centella asiatica</i> (S2) through digital content to capture the halal lifestyle trend (O2).	WO Strategies (Min-Max) 1. Comms-Driven Digital Upskilling: Train the team in advanced digital marketing (ROAS/ROI) paired with health communication copywriting (W2) to maximize e-commerce conversion (O3). 2. Digital Health Agent Recruitment: Revamp the distributor model by positioning agents as "Health Consultants" through online recruitment (W1, O3).
Threats (T) T1. Misinformation/Counterfeits T2. New competitors T3. Price wars	ST Strategies (Max-Min) 1. Anti-Misinformation Trust Strategy: Utilize BPOM legality (S1) to build transparent health messaging that educates consumers and combats counterfeit threats (T1). 2. Value over Price: Justify the price against price wars (T3) by deploying expert-led communication highlighting the clinical legacy of the product (S2, S3).	WT Strategies (Min-Min) 1. Defensive Consolidation: Restructure operational costs to mitigate dropping sales (W3) while stabilizing prices against competitors (T3). 2. Exclusive Health Communicator Network: Rebuild loyalty among remaining agents (W1) with exclusive health literacy training, preventing them from selling competing products (T2).

Discussion on Strategic Digital Transformation and Health Communication

The positioning of PT VitaBrain in Quadrant V underscores a critical transitional phase. The findings reveal a stark contrast between the company's strong physical product legacy and its vulnerability in the digital ecosystem. This aligns with the findings of Herhausen et al. (2020), who argue that a 'digital capabilities gap' often hinders SMEs. In the health sector, this gap is exacerbated by poor health communication. The formulated WO (Weaknesses-Opportunities) strategies highlight that the traditional distribution model is increasingly obsolete against aggressive digital price wars. Therefore, upskilling the internal team is not just about mastering data analytics (ROAS/ROI); it is about integrating the Health Belief Model into digital advertising.

Ad campaigns must effectively communicate susceptibility (cognitive decline), severity, and the specific benefits of *Centella asiatica* to trigger consumer action (Kreps, 2021). As emphasized by Shabbir et al. (2022), SMEs that integrate dynamic ROI monitoring with high-quality, transparent content exhibit higher resilience. By leveraging its 18-year brand equity and integrating it with an aggressive, evidence-based digital health communication strategy targeting the adult and elderly demographics, PT VitaBrain can bypass the declining physical agent network and establish direct, trust-based consumer relationships.

Theoretical Implications of Strategic Health Communication

The findings of this study indicate that strategic health communication should no longer be viewed solely as a promotional marketing activity, but rather as a strategic organizational capability that generates sustainable competitive advantage within digital health markets. This finding extends the Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective by demonstrating that communication credibility, consumer education, and digital trust formation function as valuable intangible organizational resources. The study also reveals that within the halal supplement industry, consumer purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by informational transparency and perceived scientific legitimacy rather than by price competition alone. This suggests the emergence of a hybrid trust mechanism in which halal certification, BPOM legality, and evidence-based health communication collectively shape consumer confidence in digital marketplaces.

Furthermore, the integration of the Health Belief Model (HBM) into strategic business formulation demonstrates that health communication can directly influence perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, and behavioral intention among consumers. Consequently, strategic communication contributes not only to brand awareness but also to long-term consumer trust and repeat purchasing behavior. These findings contribute to the growing literature on digital transformation in SMEs by highlighting that technological adaptation alone is insufficient without communication capability development.

SMEs operating in health-related industries require integrated digital communication strategies capable of combating misinformation, counterfeit product narratives, and declining consumer trust within highly competitive online ecosystems. Therefore, this study proposes that strategic health communication represents a mediating capability connecting digital transformation, health literacy, consumer trust, and sustainable business performance in halal-oriented SMEs.

Beyond the Indonesian context, these findings may provide broader strategic insights for halal-oriented SMEs operating within rapidly digitalizing healthcare markets across Southeast Asia and other emerging economies facing similar challenges related to digital trust, counterfeit products, and health misinformation. The discussion above demonstrates that digital competitiveness within halal healthcare SMEs is increasingly shaped by communication capability, consumer trust formation, and strategic digital adaptation. Based on these findings, the following section summarizes the major theoretical, managerial, and strategic implications of the study.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

This study examined the strategic positioning of PT VitaBrain Indonesia within the rapidly evolving halal supplement industry by integrating SWOT analysis, the Internal-External (IE) Matrix, and strategic health communication perspectives. The findings demonstrate that the company occupies a “Hold and Maintain” position characterized by strong product legitimacy and brand legacy, yet constrained by digital capability limitations, declining distribution effectiveness, and increasingly aggressive digital competition more importantly, this study highlights that strategic health communication plays a critical role in strengthening consumer trust, improving health literacy, and supporting sustainable digital business transformation within the halal health sector. The findings suggest that in contemporary digital marketplaces, competitive advantage is no longer determined solely by product quality or pricing strategies, but increasingly by the organization’s ability to deliver transparent, evidence-based, and educational communication capable of reducing misinformation and enhancing consumer confidence.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the strategic management and health communication literature by extending the Resource-Based View (RBV) through the inclusion of communication capability and digital health literacy as strategic intangible assets. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the Health Belief Model (HBM) can be operationalized not only within public health campaigns but also within strategic business communication and digital consumer engagement frameworks. Managerially, the findings indicate that halal healthcare SMEs should reposition communication strategy as a core organizational capability rather than merely a promotional function. Companies operating within digitally competitive healthcare ecosystems increasingly require integrated communication systems capable of strengthening consumer education, perceived credibility, and long-term digital trust formation.

The findings further suggest that SMEs within the halal supplement industry should prioritize several strategic initiatives. First, companies should develop evidence-based educational communication content grounded in scientific and clinical references to improve consumer health literacy and reduce misinformation vulnerability. Second, organizations should strengthen digital communication responsiveness through data-driven marketing adaptation and continuous consumer engagement evaluation. Third, halal healthcare SMEs should integrate digital authentication mechanisms, such as QR-based verification systems, to strengthen brand legitimacy and reduce counterfeit-related trust erosion within online marketplaces. Finally, conventional distributor networks should be transformed into digitally integrated health communication ambassadors capable of delivering educational and trust-oriented consumer interaction rather than solely transaction-based selling activities.

The study also highlights that sustainable competitiveness in halal healthcare markets increasingly depends on organizational capability to reduce misinformation, improve consumer health literacy, and maintain communication transparency across digital platforms. Therefore, communication credibility should be strategically managed as an intangible organizational asset supporting long-term consumer trust and business sustainability. Despite its theoretical and managerial contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research focuses on a single halal healthcare SME operating within the Indonesian market context, thereby limiting broader industrial generalizability across different institutional, cultural, and technological environments. The findings therefore reflect a context-specific strategic transformation process rather than universally generalizable organizational behavior.

Second, this study adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design supported by IFAS–EFAS strategic scoring rather than large-scale quantitative modeling capable of statistically testing causal relationships among communication capability, digital trust, health literacy, and business sustainability variables. Third, the study relies on cross-sectional strategic observations conducted within a particular digital market period. Consequently, the analysis may not fully capture longitudinal changes in consumer trust formation, digital engagement dynamics, communication responsiveness, and organizational adaptation over time.

Furthermore, this study does not directly measure algorithmic advertising performance, consumer conversion behavior, or platform-specific digital analytics that may influence organizational competitiveness within rapidly evolving digital healthcare ecosystems. Future studies are encouraged to employ quantitative, longitudinal, and comparative cross-country approaches to examine the mediating relationships among strategic communication capability, health literacy, digital trust formation, consumer engagement, and sustainable business performance across broader halal healthcare industries. Future research may also integrate digital analytics, AI-driven marketing adaptation, and behavioral consumer data to strengthen empirical understanding of communication-driven competitiveness within digital healthcare marketplaces.

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