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The Role of Communication in Influencing the Entrepreneurial Intention of Smallholder Sheep Farming in West Java

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Abstract

Smallholder sheep farming in West Java largely follows traditional practices passed down through generations, relying heavily on inherited knowledge and methods. However, a closer examination reveals significant untapped economic potential across the upstream, on-farm, and downstream sub-sectors of the industry. Despite the promising prospects, smallholder farmers face substantial barriers in capitalizing on these opportunities, one of the key challenges being limited access to and comprehension of relevant communication. This study aims to investigate the communication factors that influence the entrepreneurial intentions of smallholder sheep farmers in West Java. Specifically, the research examines three variables: communication frequency, communication quality, and information sources. Employing a quantitative, causal-comparative research design, the findings indicate that communication plays a critical role in shaping the entrepreneurial aspirations of smallholder sheep farmers. The results underscore the importance of effective communication strategies in fostering entrepreneurial behaviour within this agricultural community.

Keywords: *Communication; Entrepreneurial Intention; Smallholder Sheep Farming; West Java.*

Introduction

Entrepreneurial activity is generally motivated by the pursuit of profit, which can be optimized when prospective business actors possess sufficient knowledge and awareness of associated risks. This notion also applies to rural communities in West Java who choose to engage in sheep farming. Based on survey results and a review of existing literature, it is evident that many villagers pursue sheep farming as a supplementary source of income, particularly with the expectation of earning returns during major Islamic holidays. The decision to raise sheep is also strongly influenced by the region's natural endowments, West Java's mountainous terrain provides an abundance of green fodder, making it highly conducive to livestock farming.

This natural availability of animal feed has contributed to the expansion of ruminant livestock production - including buffaloes, cattle, goats, sheep, and rabbits - positioning West Java as the province with the highest livestock population in Indonesia. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2022), West Java contributed 14.49% to the national beef production, 2.15% to buffalo meat, 0.029% to horse meat, 10% to goat meat, 63.70% to sheep meat, and 0.422% to pork production. These figures reflect the region's considerable potential for further development in the livestock sector, particularly in sheep farming.

Supporting this potential, Heriyadi (as cited in Maulana, 2021), a lecturer at the Faculty of Animal Husbandry at Padjadjaran University, stated that Indonesia possesses a valuable genetic resource in the form of the Garut sheep (Domba Garut), a native breed that stands out for its

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distinctive physical characteristics and superior qualities compared to other sheep breeds both domestically and internationally.

Sheep farming is intrinsically part of the broader agri-food and agribusiness system, which comprises a network of interdependent activities ranging from production, processing, distribution, and marketing of agricultural products and services to fulfill human nutritional needs (Boehlje, 1999; Cook & Chaddad, 2000). This systemic approach aligns with Indonesia's legal framework, such as Law No. 18 of 2012 on Food, which emphasizes sovereignty, independence, and sustainability in managing food systems to meet basic needs, and Law No. 22 of 2019 on Sustainable Agricultural Cultivation, which mandates the integration of environmental, social, cultural, and economic aspects into agricultural development.

The agribusiness system consists of several interconnected sub-systems, namely upstream (input supply), on-farm production, post-harvest handling, processing, distribution, and retail, each of which holds significant entrepreneurial potential. According to the agribusiness framework first introduced by Davis and Goldberg (1957), agribusiness encompasses all business activities related to the production, storage, processing, and distribution of agricultural products. When fully understood and effectively leveraged, this system offers substantial profit opportunities across the value chain.

Despite this potential, many smallholder sheep farmers in West Java are not fully aware of the entrepreneurial opportunities embedded within the agribusiness system, primarily due to communication gaps and limited access to relevant information. Although government agencies and agricultural extension services regularly provide training and support, participation levels remain low, thereby inhibiting the effective transfer of knowledge and technology. This communication disconnect poses a significant barrier to optimizing sheep farming practices and maximizing the sector's economic potential.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the communication challenges that hinder entrepreneurial development among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java. Knowledge dissemination can be enhanced through various communication strategies, including face-to-face interactions, digital technologies, social media, mass media (such as television and radio), and participatory platforms like farmer group discussions. Strengthening these communication mechanisms is essential to unlock the considerable entrepreneurial potential within the sheep agribusiness value chain.

The Role of Communication in Shaping Entrepreneurial Intentions Among Smallholder Sheep Farmers in West Java

Effective communication plays a vital role in delivering messages to audiences across all educational backgrounds. For individuals with limited formal education, clear communication becomes even more crucial due to potential challenges in interpreting and comprehending complex information. In this context, communication competence is defined as the sender's ability to convey information clearly, accurately, and in a manner that is easily understood by the target audience. This section elaborates on the significance of communication competence in disseminating information to audiences with lower levels of education (Berger, 2022; Fernandez & Meyers, 2023; Rogers & Richards, 2022; Rosenberg & Peters, 2023; Schwartz & Collins, 2023; Thompson, 2023; Williams, 2022).

This study examines communication practices by emphasizing how various elements of communication influence audience understanding and perception. Grounded in contemporary communication theory, the conceptual framework focuses on message delivery, audience cognition, and the impact of communication strategies on knowledge retention (DeVito, 2020). Specifically, this research highlights that the communication techniques employed significantly affect the degree to which smallholder sheep farmers comprehend the information presented to them. Among these techniques, communication frequency emerges as a critical factor in enhancing message absorption. Repetition of key messages is a foundational strategy that strengthens understanding. Empirical evidence supports that repeated exposure across multiple communication channels increases the probability of comprehension and retention (McQuail, 2010). Consistent communication fosters reinforcement, enabling recipients to process and retain essential information. However, Dillard and Shen (2013) caution that the effectiveness of message repetition depends on the quality of the content. To avoid message fatigue or desensitization, repeated messages must remain clear, relevant, and accurate.

The frequency of communication among key stakeholders, namely farmers, extension agents, village administrators, and related institutions is influenced by these communication parameters. Equally important is the quality of communication, particularly regarding the clarity and accessibility of the message. Clear language, structured explanations, and relatable examples significantly enhance comprehension among rural audiences (Cutlip et al., 2012). In contrast, the use of jargon, ambiguous phrasing, or overly technical language may obstruct understanding—even when messages are frequently delivered (Griffin, 2011). Key quality indicators include the clarity of the conveyed information, the appropriateness of the language used, the relevance of content to the farmers' needs, and the efficacy of interactions between farmers and information providers.

Another vital determinant is the credibility of the information source. Public speaking literature emphasizes that the perceived trustworthiness of a source is critical in building audience confidence in the message (DeVito, 2022). In rural communities, source credibility is often shaped by local social structures and cultural norms. Consequently, figures such as agricultural extension officers, village leaders, and representatives from relevant institutions play a central role in information dissemination. In contrast, mass media - particularly digital platforms - are rarely utilized due to low levels of digital literacy and limited access to technology (Rosenberg & Peters, 2023). Peer-to-peer information sharing among farmers is common, but the accuracy of such information can be questionable, as it largely depends on the trustworthiness of the individual farmer.

Demographic factors such as age and educational attainment also influence how smallholder farmers receive and process information (DeVito, 2020). Research suggests that effective communicators must align their approach with the audience's knowledge base and experience to build rapport and foster trust (Thompson, 2023). Field data indicates that most smallholder sheep farmers in West Java are over the age of 45 and have completed, at most, junior secondary education. These demographic characteristics significantly limit their ability to engage with technology-driven information, particularly in the current era of artificial intelligence, where many remain unsure of where to begin or how to seek answers related to sheep farming or income enhancement strategies.

This limited access to information results in reduced awareness and engagement in livestock support services. Even when programs such as training, extension services, or free veterinary check-ups are offered, participation remains low. This is largely due to inadequate

understanding of the messages conveyed, leading to misinterpretation and varied perceptions among the farmers.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the pivotal role of communication in enhancing smallholder sheep farming as a form of rural entrepreneurship. The study aims to identify and explain key communication-related factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java, with the goal of supporting their financial success.

To address the research objectives, this study explores specific communication technique variables as potential predictors of entrepreneurial intention. The field data identified three primary communication-related factors: communication frequency, communication quality, and source credibility. These serve as the independent variables in the study, with entrepreneurial intention as the dependent variable.

The following hypotheses are proposed:

H01: Communication frequency, communication quality, and information sources do not have a significant combined effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

Ha1: Communication frequency, communication quality, and information sources have a significant combined effect on the entrepreneurial intentions of smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

H02: Communication frequency alone does not significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

Ha2: Communication frequency alone has a significant influence on entrepreneurial intentions among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

H03: Communication quality alone does not significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

Ha3: Communication quality alone has a significant influence on entrepreneurial intentions among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

H04: Source of information alone does not significantly influence entrepreneurial intentions among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

Ha4: Source of information alone has a significant influence on entrepreneurial intentions among smallholder sheep farmers in West Java.

Research Methodology

This study aims to examine the significant role of communication techniques in the implementation of the sheep farming agribusiness system in West Java, with a particular focus on their influence on the entrepreneurial intentions of smallholder farmers. A quantitative research method was employed using a causal-comparative research design, as the investigation seeks to understand events that have already occurred. This method is appropriate for assessing the impact of communication techniques on the implementation of the agribusiness system among smallholder sheep farmers in the Situraja District of Sumedang Regency.

The primary objective of this research is to identify causal relationships between communication techniques and entrepreneurial intentions. Causal-comparative research is particularly useful when investigating cause-and-effect relationships between variables after the event has taken place. In this study, communication techniques are considered the independent variables, and entrepreneurial intention serves as the dependent variable. As

emphasized by Creswell (2011), causal-comparative research necessitates a prior examination of correlations between variables to establish patterns of influence.

Despite the prevalence of small-scale, traditional sheep farming practices in West Java - characterized by reliance on natural surroundings and limited agribusiness integration - this study underscores the need to enhance communication strategies. Improving these techniques is expected to bolster the entrepreneurial drive of farmers and contribute to sustainable rural economic development. This necessitates an investigation into the extent of influence, whether jointly or partially - exerted by various communication variables on entrepreneurial intention.

Research Variables and Indicators

The study includes one dependent variable and three independent variables:

- Dependent Variable (Y):
  - Entrepreneurial intention of smallholder sheep farmers in West Java
- Independent Variables (X):
  - X1: Frequency of communication
  - X2: Quality of communication
  - X3: Source of information

Each variable is measured using specific indicators designed to assess its influence on farmers' entrepreneurial intentions.

Population and Sample

The research population consists of smallholder sheep farmers in West Java, with a focus on Situraja District, Sumedang Regency. The total population is approximately 1,000 breeders distributed across 23 villages. From this population, 232 respondents were selected as the research sample using convenience sampling (Daniel & Gates, 2013), based on the accessibility and willingness of breeders to participate in the study through interviews.

Data Collection Instruments and Techniques

Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered through face-to-face interviews (Diasuma, 2018). Two separate instruments were utilized:

- A 20-item questionnaire measuring communication techniques (frequency, quality, and information sources).
- A 10-item questionnaire assessing entrepreneurial intentions.

Both instruments employed a five-point Likert scale:

- Strongly Agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly Disagree (1)

Research Results

Classic Assumptions Testing

This study conducts three classical assumption tests to ensure the validity of the regression model: the Normality Test, Multicollinearity Test, and Heteroscedasticity Test. The explanations and results of each test are detailed below:

1. *Normality Test*

The normality of the data was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test with Monte Carlo significance, utilizing SPSS software. As the study employs Entrepreneurial Intention (Y) as the dependent variable, the test was applied to the residuals from the regression model.

Table 1.
Normality Test Results Using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		232
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	3.18451719
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.045
	Positive	.028
	Negative	-.045
Test Statistic		.045
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200[c,d]

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Source: Researcher Processing, 2024

Additionally, using Monte Carlo significance, the result was 0.065, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the residuals are normally distributed.

2. *Multicollinearity Test*

The multicollinearity test was conducted to determine whether the independent variables, namely: Communication Frequency (X1), Communication Quality (X2), and Information Sources (X3) are highly correlated with one another.

Table 2.
Multicollinearity Test Results

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	6.583	1.960		3.359	.001		
	Communication Frequency	.841	.093	.569	9.047	.000	.449	2.225
	Communication Quality	.098	.078	.071	1.255	.211	.557	1.796
	Information Sources	.329	.090	.208	3.675	.000	.557	1.796

a. Dependent Variable: Smallholder Sheep Farming Entrepreneurial Intentions

Sumber: Olahan Peneliti, 2024

Source: Researcher Processing, 2024

The results show that all VIF values are below 10, and all tolerance values are above 0.1, indicating no multicollinearity among the independent variables.

3. *Heteroscedasticity Test*

To test for heteroscedasticity, the absolute residuals (ABS_RES2) were regressed on the independent variables. The following table presents the results:

Table 3.
Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Si
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.561	1.186		2.159	
	Communication Frequency	.009	.056	.017	.168	
	Communication Quality	-.039	.047	-.074	-.837	
	Information Sources	.036	.054	.059	.664	

a. Dependent Variable: ABS_RES2

Source: Researcher Processing, 2024

All significance values exceed 0.05, suggesting that heteroscedasticity is not present in the model. Thus, the residuals are homoscedastic.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis of this study investigates whether Communication Frequency (X1), Communication Quality (X2), and Information Sources (X3) significantly influence Sheep Farmers' Entrepreneurial Intentions (Y) both simultaneously and partially.

1. *F-Test (Simultaneous Effect)*

Table 4.
ANOVA (F-Test) Results

Model	F-Statistic	Sig.
1	111.278	.000

Source: Researcher Processing, 2024

The significance value of 0.000 < 0.05 indicates that the independent variables simultaneously have a significant influence on entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, H1 is accepted, and H0 is rejected.

2. *t-Test (Partial Effect)*

Table 5.
t-Test Results

Variable	Coefficient (B)	t-Statistic	Sig.
Communication Frequency	0.841	9.047	0.000
Communication Quality	0.098	1.255	0.211
Information Sources	0.329	3.675	0.000

Source: Researcher Processing, 2024

Communication Frequency (X1) and Information Sources (X3) have a significant partial effect on Entrepreneurial Intentions ($p < 0.05$). Communication Quality (X2) does not have a significant partial effect ($p = 0.211 > 0.05$).

The resulting regression equation is:

Y = - 6.583 + 0.841 (Communication Frequency) + 0.329 (Communication Quality) + 0.098 (Information Source)

The interpretation of the linear equation formula is as follows;

- For every 1% increase in Communication Frequency, the Sheep Farmer's Entrepreneurial Intention will be achieved by 0.549 points.
- For every 1% increase in Communication Quality, the Entrepreneurial Intention of Sheep Farmers will be achieved by 0.299 points
- For every 1% increase in Information Sources, the Entrepreneurial Intention of Sheep Farmers will be achieved by 0.496 points

Of the three independent variables above, the one with the largest increase every 1% is Communication Frequency, followed by Information Source, and the smallest is Information Source.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 6.
Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
0.771	0.594	0.589	3.205

Source: Researcher Processing, 2024

The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.589 indicates that 58.9% of the variance in Entrepreneurial Intentions can be explained by the variables Communication Frequency, Communication Quality, and Information Sources. The remaining 41.1% may be attributed to other variables not included in this study.

Discussions

The agribusiness system provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing business activities within the agricultural sector. This system is segmented into several interconnected sub-sectors: the upstream agribusiness sub-sector, the primary agricultural sub-sector, the downstream agribusiness sub-sector, and various supporting sub-sectors. Each sub-sector plays a distinct role in facilitating the full cycle of agricultural production and commerce.

In the upstream agribusiness sub-sector, economic activities related to sheep farming include breeding services, feed production industries, veterinary pharmaceuticals (including medicines and vitamins), and the provision of equipment for housing and handling sheep, particularly in the context of milk production.

The primary agricultural sub-sector—often referred to as on-farm agribusiness—focuses on the production of the primary commodity: sheep. This involves a wide range of activities with economic value, such as the cultivation and provision of green fodder, labor supply, and maintenance of environmental hygiene around livestock enclosures.

The downstream agribusiness sub-sector encompasses post-harvest processes and the commercialization of livestock products. Activities in this sub-sector include the direct sale and marketing of live sheep, processing into intermediate or final products, and the distribution of these goods to end consumers (Rochce, 2020).

The successful operation of these three sub-sectors relies heavily on the supporting agribusiness sub-sectors, which include institutions that provide vital services. These support systems encompass financial institutions offering capital (e.g., banks), transportation logistics for post-harvest distribution, research and development entities, as well as extension services and consultancy aimed at enhancing livestock quality. Crucially, supportive government policies play an enabling role by fostering socio-economic development through livestock agribusiness (Fleet et al., 2014).

The efficient functioning of each agribusiness sub-sector is contingent upon effective communication. In entrepreneurial ventures, communication is not merely a support mechanism but a foundational element. Proficient communication—both verbal and written—is essential for business actors, particularly in agriculture, where the transmission of knowledge, strategies, and technical information underpins operational success. In this context, communication involves the exchange of ideas, messages, and concepts cantered on achieving the core objective of agribusiness: generating profit (Haryanto et al., 2020).

Business communication, therefore, follows a general framework that facilitates the systematic flow of information across all actors involved in the agribusiness value chain. This framework is illustrated below:

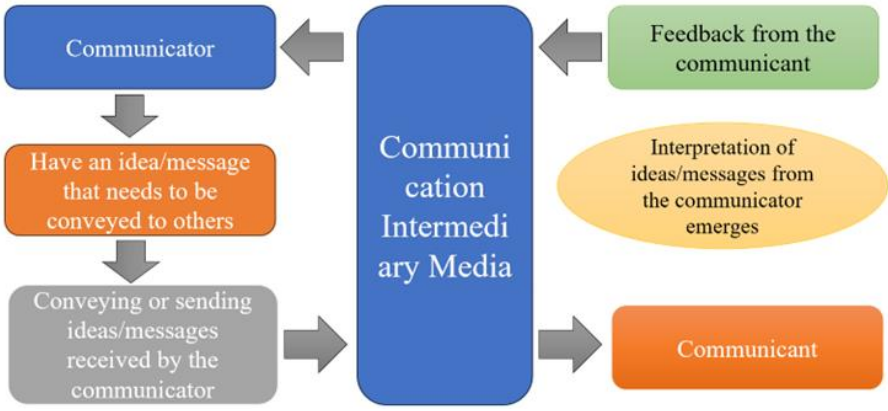

Figure 1.
Communication Flow
Source: Bovée & Thill (2012)

Communication patterns play a crucial role in supporting the entrepreneurial intentions of smallholder sheep farmers, particularly within the framework of an integrated agribusiness system. These communication patterns generally follow three main directions: vertical, horizontal, and diagonal (Feriyanto & Triana, 2020).

Vertical communication involves the top-down dissemination of information from central institutions, namely policymakers, researchers, and relevant governmental agencies to sheep farmers at the village level. This form of communication typically conveys strategic messages, such as the importance of adopting agribusiness systems in livestock management.

Horizontal communication occurs among actors within the community-based sheep farming network. These include interactions among farmers, local cooperatives, and community-based extension services. Horizontal exchanges allow for shared interpretation and local adaptation of information received through vertical channels.

Diagonal communication takes place when individuals seek clarification or guidance from experts outside their direct line of authority but within the larger agribusiness ecosystem. For instance, a farmer may consult a researcher or technical advisor for deeper understanding when information received is unclear. These patterns of communication are illustrated in the figure 2 below.

The effective implementation of the sheep farming agribusiness system depends on strong communication across the upstream, on-farm, and downstream sectors. When communication is conducted clearly and consistently, it enables all stakeholders, namely farmers, extension agents, researchers, and policymakers, to form a mutual understanding of the economic processes involved. This fosters beneficial relationships that help realize the overarching goal of rural development and farmer welfare (Fajar Supanto, 2021).

Communication whether verbal, written, or through electronic media, must prioritize mutual needs and shared understanding, recognizing the inherently social nature of humans (Riyanto Adji, 2023). Effective communication is not merely the transmission of information; it is a process of meaning-making. Thus, the frequency, quality, and source of communication become key factors in shaping farmers' understanding and intention to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

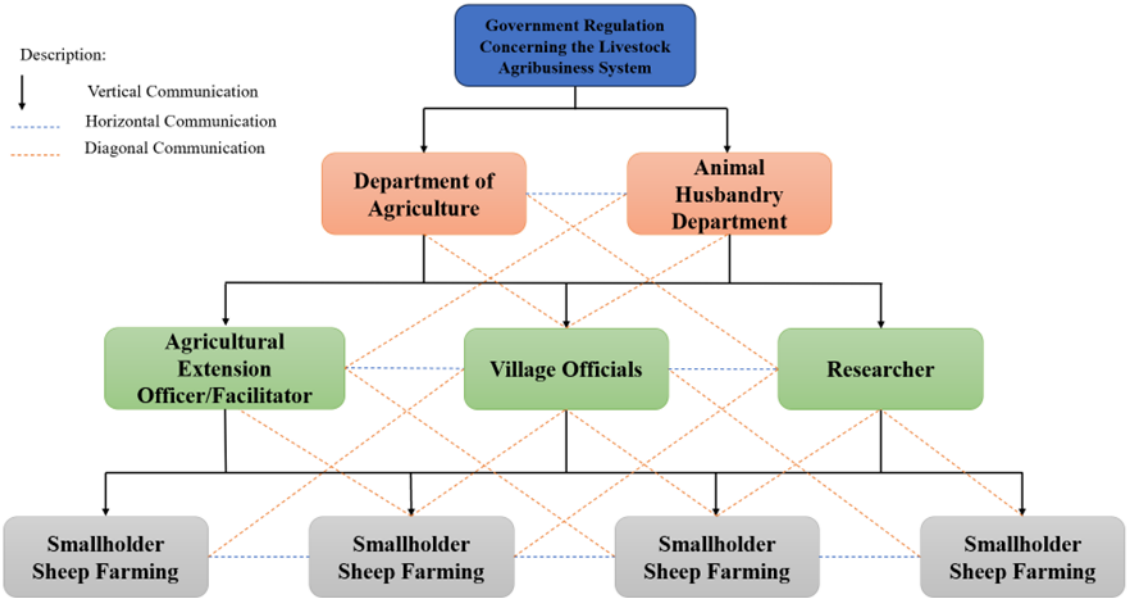

Figure 2.
Process of Communication Patterns Among Farmers
Source: Researcher Processing, 2024

Key Factors Influencing Entrepreneurial Intentions

Based on research findings, three communication-related factors significantly influence the entrepreneurial intentions of smallholder sheep farmers in West Java:

1. *Frequency of Communication*
   The analysis indicates that the intensity of communication, especially between farmers and actors such as government officials, extension workers, and researchers plays the most critical role. More frequent interactions are strongly associated with improved farmer comprehension and increased motivation to adopt entrepreneurial practices.
2. *Source of Information*
   The credibility and relevance of information sources also significantly influence entrepreneurial intent. In Sumedang Regency, West Java, traditional figures such as agricultural extension officers, village officials, and subject-matter experts are regarded as more trustworthy than mass or digital media. Farmers tend to respond positively to information delivered by competent and respected local authorities.
3. *Quality of Communication*
   This factor encompasses the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of information delivery. Despite efforts to communicate new practices, many smallholder farmers - most of whom are over 45 years old with only junior or senior high school education - struggle to fully grasp complex agribusiness concepts. This educational barrier hinders their ability to implement innovative practices despite the availability of natural resources in rural areas.

These three factors: communication frequency, source credibility, and communication quality, can significantly improve the implementation of sheep agribusiness systems if coupled with intrinsic motivation from the farmers themselves. When smallholder farmers are positioned not merely as passive recipients but as active subjects and agents of transformation, their capacity to absorb innovations and adopt new technologies increases (Riyanto Adji, 2024).

Communication, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Transformation

Effective communication is the foundation for fostering entrepreneurship rooted in innovation and technology. As Adji and Sen (2023) argue, when farmers possess both the communication skills and the understanding to engage meaningfully with new knowledge, they are more likely to evolve into innovation-driven entrepreneurs. This aligns with Joseph Schumpeter's theory of "creative destruction" as articulated in Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (1942), which posits that technological progress and innovation inherently disrupt and replace outdated industries and models.

Thus, the strategic use of communication techniques becomes essential for transforming traditional sheep farming into a dynamic agribusiness sector in West Java. Through consistent, relevant, and high-quality communication, supported by credible sources and active farmer participation, the region can cultivate a new generation of entrepreneurial farmers capable of leveraging innovation for sustainable rural development.

Conclusion and Implications

Effective communication is vital in conveying messages to audiences with limited educational attainment, as it enhances comprehension and retention, minimizes miscommunication, builds trust, facilitates behavioural change, and encourages active participation. Communicators who are skilled in adapting their messages to suit the capacities and needs of such audiences are more likely to succeed in transmitting actionable and meaningful information. Therefore, developing competencies in inclusive and accessible communication is essential, particularly in contexts where socio-educational barriers may hinder message reception.

This study identified three key communication variables - frequency of communication, communication quality, and credible sources of information - that significantly influence the entrepreneurial intentions of smallholder sheep farmers in Sumedang Regency, West Java. These findings underscore the central role of communication in supporting and advancing agribusiness practices among rural livestock farmers. In particular, the frequency and clarity of information exchanges between farmers, extension agents, researchers, and government institutions contribute directly to shaping farmers' entrepreneurial mindset and readiness to adopt agribusiness systems.

In the context of rapid technological advancement and digital transformation, communication techniques must evolve to remain effective and efficient. The findings suggest that integrating digital communication tools with traditional knowledge-sharing mechanisms can improve access to timely, accurate, and contextually relevant information. This is especially crucial as the farming population transitions to a younger demographic (ages 25–50), which tends to be more receptive to innovation and technology adoption.

As agribusiness models shift in response to globalization, climate challenges, and technological disruption, smallholder farmers who can engage with modern communication channels and tools will be better positioned to innovate and thrive. Therefore, empowering smallholder farmers through targeted communication strategies that rooted in accessibility, relevance, and technological inclusion, it will be essential for sustaining rural livelihoods and fostering inclusive agricultural entrepreneurship.

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