



Hipapi Sulawesi Communication Strategy in Building a Brand of Master of Ceremony for Weddings in Makassar

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the communication strategy of HIPAPI South Sulawesi in Building the Brand of Wedding Master of Ceremonies (MCs) in Makassar. This research was conducted at the Indonesian Wedding MC Association (HIPAPI) South Sulawesi. This study used a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. This research was motivated by the increasing demand for professionalism among wedding MCs in Makassar, which is not yet fully supported by a strong image and competency standards. This study aims to analyze the communication strategies implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi in building the brand of wedding MCs and their implications for increasing brand awareness and professional image. The results indicate that the communication strategies implemented include the use of social media, member training, and collaboration with wedding vendors. These strategies contribute to increased brand awareness and strengthen MC's image as a competent and standardized profession. Furthermore, public trust is enhanced, impacting job opportunities and the economic value of MC services. These findings highlight the importance of a structured communication strategy in building a professional image and provide practical benefits for the development of professional organizations and service industry players.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of the wedding industry in Indonesia has transformed weddings into highly organized cultural and commercial events that require professional coordination and communication management. In urban centers such as Makassar, the increasing demand for personalized and culturally sophisticated wedding ceremonies has elevated the strategic role of the Master of Ceremonies (MC). Contemporary wedding MCs are no longer positioned merely as event hosts, but as communicative actors responsible for managing symbolic interaction, audience engagement, emotional atmosphere, and ceremonial continuity throughout the event. Previous studies have emphasized that communication competence, public interaction skills, and situational adaptability are increasingly central to professional MC performance within the creative service industry. The professionalization of wedding MCs has simultaneously intensified competition among practitioners (Rubtcova, 2022; Rohman & Harmonis, 2024; Batinoluho, 2026). In response, communication strategy and branding practices have become increasingly important for establishing professional legitimacy, public trust, and market differentiation. Existing scholarship has widely discussed branding within creative industries, particularly in relation to social media visibility, influencer communication, and personal

reputation management. However, much of this literature primarily focuses on individual personal branding practices rather than collective organizational branding conducted by professional associations. Studies on communication strategy within event and creative-service professions also tend to emphasize promotional activities without sufficiently examining how professional organizations institutionalize standards, credibility, and collective identity formation (Belchenko, 2025; Gaskins, 2026; Salem et al., 2026).

This study positions branding as a collective organizational process rather than merely an individual self-presentation strategy. In this research, “branding” refers to the strategic construction of professional identity and public perception through organizational communication practices (Alshammari & Alshammari, 2025; Mustapha et al., 2025). “Personal branding” refers to the individual effort of MC practitioners to promote their unique communication style, competence, and professional persona. In contrast, “collective branding” refers to the organizational effort undertaken by a professional association to establish shared standards, credibility, and symbolic legitimacy for its members. Meanwhile, “strategic communication” is understood as the planned and systematic use of communication channels, messages, and organizational activities to achieve long-term institutional objectives. These concepts are analytically distinct but interconnected within the process of professionalizing wedding MC services (De Brabandere et al., 2025; Unanue, 2026; Zheng, 2026).

Within this context, HIPAPI South Sulawesi emerges as a significant organizational actor in the wedding industry ecosystem of Makassar. HIPAPI South Sulawesi functions not only as a professional association for wedding MCs but also as an institution responsible for shaping professional standards, strengthening organizational credibility, and constructing a collective professional image for its members. Through training programs, digital communication practices, public events, and collaboration with wedding vendors, the organization attempts to institutionalize the perception of wedding MCs as skilled and culturally competent professionals (Rubtcova, 2022; Putri et al., 2024; Anggadwita et al., 2024). Therefore, the primary focus of this study is not the personal branding practices of individual MCs, but rather the organizational communication strategy implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi in collectively building the professional brand of wedding MCs in Makassar.

The importance of studying HIPAPI South Sulawesi also lies in the broader transformation of communication practices within the digital era. The development of social media platforms has significantly altered how professional reputation and visibility are constructed within the service industry (Duffy & Sawey, 2022; Ogoina et al., 2024; Rachmad, 2024). Digital portfolios, Instagram content, event documentation, and online audience engagement now function as strategic communication tools that influence public perception and market trust. Previous studies have acknowledged the role of digital media in branding and professional promotion; however, limited research has explored how professional associations strategically coordinate these digital practices as part of an integrated organizational branding strategy. Consequently, the communication practices implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi provide an important empirical context for understanding how collective professional legitimacy is constructed through both organizational and digital communication mechanisms.

The existence of the MCMA Community further highlights the relevance of organizational differentiation within Makassar’s wedding MC industry. Unlike HIPAPI South Sulawesi, which operates through formal organizational structures, competency standards, and institutional programs, MCMA primarily functions as an informal networking community among MC practitioners. This distinction is analytically important because it demonstrates how organizational structure, communication strategy, and institutional formalization may influence public legitimacy and professional positioning within the same occupational field

(Høiland & Klemsdal, 2022; Mellquist, 2022; Lenz & Söderbaum, 2023). The comparison does not function as the central object of analysis, but rather as contextual evidence showing that HIPAPI South Sulawesi adopts a more structured collective branding approach than informal MC communities operating in Makassar. Despite the growing relevance of communication strategy and branding within professional creative industries, research specifically examining collective organizational branding in the wedding MC profession remains limited. Existing studies largely focus on individual digital self-presentation, influencer branding, or event marketing communication, while insufficient attention has been given to how professional organizations construct collective credibility, regulate professional identity, and shape public trust through strategic communication (Shutaleva et al., 2022; Shulman, 2022; van et al., 2024).

Moreover, limited scholarship has explored these issues within localized cultural industries in Indonesia, particularly within the context of wedding services closely connected to regional ceremonial traditions and cultural representation. This gap demonstrates the need for research that examines how organizational communication strategy contributes to the professionalization and legitimization of creative-service professions at the local level. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the communication strategy implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi in building the collective professional brand of wedding MCs in Makassar and to examine the implications of this strategy for strengthening brand awareness, professional image, and public trust within the wedding industry. By focusing on organizational communication rather than individual self-branding, this research contributes to communication studies and branding scholarship by providing a clearer understanding of how professional associations construct collective legitimacy and institutional identity within contemporary creative industries.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a descriptive-analytical design. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand the organizational communication strategies implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi in building the collective professional brand of wedding Master of Ceremonies (MCs) in Makassar. Qualitative research is appropriate for examining social meanings, organizational practices, communication interactions, and professional experiences from the perspectives of the actors involved. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research enables researchers to explore complex social phenomena through participants' experiences, interpretations, and interactions within their natural settings. The descriptive-analytical design was chosen to provide a systematic description of HIPAPI South Sulawesi's communication activities while simultaneously analyzing how these strategies contribute to brand awareness, professional image formation, and public trust toward wedding MCs in Makassar. The focus of this study is organizational communication and collective branding rather than individual personal branding practices. Therefore, the unit of analysis is the communication strategy developed institutionally by HIPAPI South Sulawesi as a professional organization. The study specifically examines how the organization constructs professional legitimacy through communication planning, digital media utilization, member standardization, organizational activities, and external collaboration with stakeholders in the wedding industry. By adopting this approach, the research aims to generate an in-depth understanding of how collective professional branding is strategically developed within the local creative-service industry context.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary research instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. As explained by Lexy J. Moleong, the researcher's direct involvement is essential because qualitative inquiry requires sensitivity toward social interaction, contextual meaning, and participant interpretation. In this study, the researcher assumed several interconnected roles throughout the research process. First, the researcher acted as a participant observer by attending HIPAPI organizational activities, training programs, meetings, and selected wedding events involving HIPAPI-affiliated MCs. This role enabled the researcher to observe communication practices, organizational interactions, performance standards, and branding activities directly within their natural setting. Second, the researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with organizational administrators, members, vendors, and clients to obtain detailed information regarding communication strategies, professional image construction, and stakeholder perceptions. Third, the researcher functioned as an analyst who interpreted empirical findings by connecting field data with organizational communication theory, branding theory, and strategic communication concepts relevant to the study. Throughout the research process, reflexivity was continuously maintained to minimize subjective bias. The researcher carefully documented field observations, interview impressions, and analytical reflections through field notes and research memos to ensure transparency and consistency during interpretation and analysis.

Research Location and Time

This research was conducted in Makassar, which serves as the central operational area of HIPAPI South Sulawesi and one of the major centers of wedding industry development in Eastern Indonesia. Makassar was selected as the research location because of its active wedding-service ecosystem, the growing demand for professional MC services, and the strategic presence of HIPAPI South Sulawesi as a professional association for wedding MC practitioners. The city also represents a relevant socio-cultural context where modern wedding industry practices intersect with strong local ceremonial traditions, particularly Bugis and Makassar wedding customs. The research was conducted from November 2025 until February 2026. During this period, the researcher carried out interviews, field observations, documentation collection, and data verification activities. The relatively extended duration of fieldwork enabled the researcher to observe organizational activities continuously and to establish sufficient engagement with participants to obtain credible and in-depth qualitative data.

Data Types and Sources

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained directly from research participants through in-depth interviews, observations, and field interactions. The primary data focused on participants' experiences, perceptions, communication practices, organizational strategies, and evaluations related to HIPAPI South Sulawesi's efforts in building the professional brand of wedding MCs. Interviews were guided by semi-structured interview protocols developed according to the research objectives and conceptual framework. Primary data were collected from several categories of participants, including HIPAPI South Sulawesi administrators, organizational members, wedding organizers, and clients who had used the services of HIPAPI-affiliated MCs. These participants were selected because of their direct involvement and experience with the organizational communication practices being studied. Secondary data were obtained from organizational documents, social media content, event documentation, training materials, meeting records, photographs, promotional materials, and relevant academic literature related to organizational

communication, branding, and professional communication practices. Secondary data functioned as supporting evidence to strengthen the interpretation of primary findings and to provide broader contextual understanding regarding the organizational activities and communication strategies implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi.

Research Informants

The selection of informants in this study was conducted purposively based on their relevance, knowledge, and involvement in the communication activities and professional practices of HIPAPI South Sulawesi. Purposive sampling was employed because qualitative research prioritizes information richness and contextual depth rather than statistical representation. Informants were selected according to their capacity to provide detailed insights into organizational communication strategies, professional branding practices, and stakeholder perceptions regarding wedding MC professionalism in Makassar. This study involved a total of eight informants divided into four categories. The first category consisted of two HIPAPI South Sulawesi administrators who were directly involved in organizational planning, communication strategy formulation, member development, and external relations. These informants were selected because they possessed institutional knowledge regarding the organization's vision, branding objectives, and communication programs. The second category consisted of two active HIPAPI members working professionally as wedding MCs.

These informants were chosen to provide perspectives regarding the implementation of organizational communication strategies at the practitioner level, including experiences related to professional image development, organizational identity, and interaction with clients and vendors. The third category included two wedding organizers and vendors who frequently collaborated with HIPAPI-affiliated MCs during wedding events. Their perspectives were important for understanding how organizational branding and professional reputation influence vendor trust, professional collaboration, and client recommendations within the wedding industry ecosystem. The fourth category consisted of two clients who had previously used the services of HIPAPI-affiliated wedding MCs. These informants provided insights into audience perception, professional credibility, communication quality, and the influence of organizational reputation on MC selection decisions. The selection of informants continued until sufficient depth and consistency of information were achieved. Data collection was concluded when the researcher identified recurring themes and no substantially new information emerged from additional interviews, indicating data saturation.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. These techniques were selected to enable triangulation across multiple forms of evidence and to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The primary technique used was semi-structured in-depth interviews. A total of eight interviews were conducted with informants from the four participant categories. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 90 minutes and was conducted face-to-face in locations agreed upon by the participants, including offices, cafés, organizational meeting spaces, and wedding venues. All interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed from the research objectives while still allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives. With participant consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim to facilitate systematic analysis. Participant observation was conducted during several HIPAPI organizational activities, including training sessions, public events, internal meetings, and wedding ceremonies involving HIPAPI-affiliated MCs. Through observation, the researcher examined communication interactions, organizational behavior, member presentation, audience engagement, and branding practices implemented during both formal

and informal activities. Field observations also enabled the researcher to capture non-verbal expressions, symbolic communication practices, and organizational dynamics that could not be fully obtained through interviews alone. Observational findings were documented through field notes and photographic documentation where permitted. Documentation studies were conducted to support and validate interview and observational data. The researcher collected and analyzed organizational documents, Instagram content, promotional materials, activity posters, training materials, event documentation, meeting records, and media publications related to HIPAPI South Sulawesi. Social media documentation was particularly important because digital communication constituted one of the organization's primary branding strategies. In addition, testimonial content from clients and vendors was analyzed to understand how organizational reputation and professional image were publicly communicated and perceived.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive analysis model developed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. The analysis process was conducted continuously throughout the research process and involved four interconnected stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The first stage involved organizing and compiling interview transcripts, field notes, observation records, and documentation materials collected during fieldwork. After data collection, the researcher conducted data reduction by selecting relevant information, identifying recurring themes, coding important statements, and categorizing findings according to the research focus. Coding was conducted manually by grouping data into themes such as organizational communication strategy, collective branding, digital media utilization, professional image, public trust, and stakeholder collaboration.

The next stage involved data display, where the researcher systematically organized the findings into narrative descriptions, thematic categories, and conceptual relationships to facilitate interpretation. Data displays enabled the researcher to identify patterns, similarities, contradictions, and relationships among informant perspectives and observed communication practices. Conclusions were drawn through continuous interpretation and verification of the findings. The researcher compared empirical evidence obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation with relevant theoretical concepts in organizational communication, branding, and strategic communication studies. The conclusions were continuously refined throughout the analysis process to ensure consistency, analytical depth, and alignment with the research objectives.

Result and Discussion

The results and discussion section presents the findings obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation conducted with administrators, members, vendors, and clients affiliated with HIPAPI South Sulawesi. The analysis focuses on how the organization implements communication strategies to build the professional image and brand of wedding Master of Ceremonies (MCs) in Makassar. The discussion further examines the implications of these strategies for brand awareness, professional legitimacy, public trust, and the development of the wedding MC profession within the local wedding industry.

HIPAPI South Sulawesi's Communication Strategy for Building the Wedding MC Brand in Makassar

HIPAPI South Sulawesi's communication strategy for building the wedding MC brand in Makassar is based on several key aspects, including long-term goals, external collaborations, and professional image building. Based on interviews with administrators and members,

several key points were focused on in this plan, including introducing the wedding MC profession, strengthening the organization's image, and expanding its reach through collaboration with various parties. The Chairperson of the South Sulawesi Hipapi Regional Leadership Council (DPW) explained that Hipapi South Sulawesi's primary vision is to promote the wedding MC profession as a valued and respected profession, both locally and nationally. This relates not only to public speaking skills but also to the important role that wedding MCs play in preserving local culture, particularly wedding customs in South Sulawesi. Aida Gunawan explained:

"At Hipapi South Sulawesi, I personally dream of Hipapi being known throughout Eastern Indonesia, through South Sulawesi. Hipapi South Sulawesi is the first regional leadership council (DPW) in Eastern Indonesia, although there were already members in Western Indonesia. By establishing Hipapi South Sulawesi, Aida hopes to open the eyes of the people of Makassar to the fact that the wedding MC profession is a highly respected profession, not only for its professional performance at events, but also for its vital role in preserving culture, especially in South Sulawesi."

This plan focuses on changing the public's perception of the wedding MC profession, from merely an entertainment profession to one that plays a vital role in preserving and developing local cultural heritage. This strategy also plays a role in increasing understanding of the importance of traditional wedding MCs, who possess unique skills in hosting events with a strong cultural nuance. This goal demonstrates that Hipapi's communication strategy aims not only to increase the popularity of its members but also to contribute to the preservation of local culture through the MC profession. To portray Hipapi as a serious organization while maintaining a fun image, Aida emphasized the importance of conveying the message that Hipapi is a fun and relaxed place, although its members are encouraged to maintain professionalism in their work. According to her, this is part of a communication strategy to change the public's perception of the organization. Aida Gunawan explained to researchers:

"And we also want to show the public that, even though Hipapi is an organization, the people in it are very fun, don't like complicated things, and are always happy, even though there are times when they are serious. Furthermore, we also engage with the community through Hipapi's external activities, such as training, discussions, and so on."

One part of the plan to introduce Hipapi South Sulawesi as a professional wedding MC organization when it first appeared in South Sulawesi was to participate in the Cultural Discography event organized by Mitologi Bumi Sulawesi. This Cultural Dialogue activity discussed the "Sacredness of Bugis and Makassar Traditional Marriage", involving competent speakers in their fields, such as Wedding Organizers (WO), Academics, and Traditional Ritual Guides (Indo' Botting). This dialogue activity aims to broaden the public's insight and knowledge about the wedding industry and its phenomena, as well as being an initial effort by HIPAPI South Sulawesi together with related parties to design a Guidebook for Bugis and Makassar Traditional Marriage, which is one of the work programs of the DPW HIPAPI South Sulawesi management. This strategy involves a balance between professionalism and a relaxed atmosphere, with the hope that Hipapi members are seen not only as experts in their fields, but also as individuals who can interact with others in a warm and non-threatening manner. Therefore, Hipapi prioritizes the values of openness and togetherness in all its activities and continuously encourages its members to grow not only professionally but also personally. In addition to explicit strategies, this study also found an implicit communication strategy, namely through standardization mechanisms in the member selection process. The rigorous selection process demonstrates that HIPAPI has specific standards for recruiting members. These

standards relate not only to technical ability but also to experience and professional readiness. This is emphasized in an interview with Aida Gunawan, Chair of the HIPAPI South Sulawesi Regional Board.

"One of the basic and primary requirements for registering as a HIPAPI South Sulawesi member is to have a minimum of 24 (twenty-four) photo or video posts on your Instagram account, demonstrating your experience as a wedding MC."

In addition to the social media content requirement, each prospective HIPAPI member must have recommendations from existing HIPAPI South Sulawesi members. Following the recommendations and social media post selection process, all prospective members will undergo an interview with a panel of core HIPAPI South Sulawesi administrators. Requirements such as number of posts, recommendations, interviews, experience, and involvement in activities demonstrate that HIPAPI strives to maintain the quality of its members.

Indirectly, this mechanism communicates to the public that HIPAPI is a selective and professional organization. Thus, the organization's internal policies serve as a form of communication that conveys its brand values and identity to the public. The primary communication strategy implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi in building its wedding MC brand is utilizing social media, particularly Instagram, as a means of publicizing activities, but also as a primary platform for building the identity and professional image of the organization and its members. Informants stated that one of the primary strategies implemented is to consistently maximize the production and distribution of digital content. This is as conveyed in an interview excerpt with Aida Gunawan, Chair of the HIPAPI South Sulawesi Regional Executive Board.

"So, one of our primary communication strategies is through content. We encourage our colleagues at HIPAPI South Sulawesi to increase their content, both personally and for the HIPAPI South Sulawesi platform as a whole, so that Hipapi South Sulawesi becomes better known."

In utilizing Instagram as a branding tool, every HIPAPI South Sulawesi member must comply with certain requirements. The Chairperson of the South Sulawesi Hipapi Regional Leadership Council (DPW) explained that every member wishing to join Hipapi is required to have a minimum of 24 photo or video posts showcasing their experience as MCs at traditional weddings. Aida stated:

"One of the main requirements when registering to become a member of Hipapi South Sulawesi is to have a minimum of 24 Instagram posts showcasing their experience in handling traditional weddings."

This strategy aims to increase the visibility of wedding MCs and promote them as professionals capable of successfully managing events, especially traditional weddings, which are a hallmark of South Sulawesi. Furthermore, Safri Bachtiar, Secretary of the South Sulawesi Hipapi Regional Executive Board (DPW), added:

"Through social media, we can introduce Hipapi South Sulawesi more widely, not only in Makassar, but also in Eastern Indonesia, as we are the first DPW in this region."

Using Instagram as a primary social media platform provides an opportunity for members to share their personal portfolios, which can increase their visibility as wedding MCs to potential clients and others in the wedding industry. The content produced for social media is not random but rather has a specific purpose: to introduce the organization, showcase its activities, and demonstrate the competence of its members. In practice, uploaded content includes event

documentation, footage of MC performances, training activities, and even internal organizational activities.

Interestingly, this digital communication strategy is not solely focused on the organization's official accounts but is also distributed through members' personal accounts. Each HIPAPI member indirectly acts as an "extension" of the organization in disseminating communications messages. This demonstrates that HIPAPI South Sulawesi implements a decentralized communication model, where message production and distribution are handled not by a single actor, but by multiple actors within the organization's network. Furthermore, Hipapi South Sulawesi actively visits various media outlets, particularly radio stations, to introduce the organization and raise awareness of the presence of wedding MCs in Makassar. The Media Visit program was deemed effective in building the organization's image and promoting Hipapi members as professional wedding MCs. The communication strategy implemented by Hipapi South Sulawesi began by utilizing media deemed affordable and easily accessible by the internal team.

Besides social media, Hipapi South Sulawesi also holds various activities and events as part of its communication strategy. These activities serve not only as internal programs but also as a means of communicating with the public. Informants stated that the organization actively organizes various activities, from training and workshops to large-scale events involving the public. This was also stated by Aida Gunawan in an interview excerpt.

"And besides content, the second communication strategy for HIPAPI South Sulawesi is to increase activities. This means not using viral activities to attract attention, but rather creating 'gong' activities, so that people are curious to learn more about Hipapi South Sulawesi."

Hipapi South Sulawesi focuses not only on viral activities, but also on activities aimed at promoting Hipapi South Sulawesi and building public trust. These activities are oriented not only toward quantity, but also toward quality and impact on the public. The term "gong activities" refers to large-scale events designed to attract attention and increase the organization's exposure. One of the main events of Hipapi South Sulawesi is the Makassar Wedding Showcase, an exhibition showcasing Makassar wedding customs hosted by members of Hipapi South Sulawesi. As Aida Gunawan, Chair of the Hipapi South Sulawesi Regional Leadership Council (DPW), explained to researchers:

"Events like the Makassar Wedding Showcase are an opportunity to demonstrate to the public and other vendors that we are part of the larger wedding industry, and that we take our profession as MCs seriously."

The Wedding Showcase is a collaboration with the Makassar City Culture Office. This event, part of a series of events commemorating Makassar's 418th anniversary, took place over two days at the Makassar City Museum. This event marks the first collaboration between HIPAPI South Sulawesi and the Makassar City Culture Office. In addition to introducing HIPAPI to the government, this event also serves to further promote South Sulawesi culture, particularly Bugis and Makassar traditional weddings.

The various activities undertaken by HIPAPI South Sulawesi present a significant opportunity to support the existence of HIPAPI South Sulawesi and all its members, and to further enhance public awareness in Makassar. To compare wedding MCs from HIPAPI South Sulawesi members with those from non-members, direct and indirect MCs can be distinguished. In this context, the organization's activities serve as a means of direct communication, allowing the public to clearly see HIPAPI's existence and capacity.

Furthermore, HIPAPI South Sulawesi also holds educational activities such as Public Speaking classes for Wedding MCs, which aim to improve public speaking skills and introduce traditional weddings from various regions in South Sulawesi. These trainings also play a crucial role in communication strategies. In addition to improving member competency, they also serve as concrete evidence that HIPAPI is a serious organization committed to building professionalism. This is as conveyed in an interview with Auliah Anwar, a member of HIPAPI South Sulawesi.

"With the training programs of HIPAPI South Sulawesi, we not only develop our personal branding, but also gain knowledge about wedding ceremonies and customs. The more we participate in training, the emptier our cups become, ready to be refilled."

Thus, the organization's activities not only generate internal benefits but also serve as a communication tool that strengthens the organization's image in the public eye. Furthermore, the Chairperson of the South Sulawesi Hipapi Regional Executive Board (DPW) assessed that these activities are an effective way to demonstrate that Hipapi South Sulawesi focuses not only on commercial aspects, but also on the learning and professional development of its members and wedding MCs in general. To support the success of its communication strategy, HIPAPI South Sulawesi collaborates with vendors, such as wedding organizers (WO), decoration vendors, entertainment vendors, and government agencies. This strategy is implemented through ongoing communication, both formal and informal. As stated in an interview excerpt with Safri Bahtiar, Regional Secretary of HIPAPI South Sulawesi,

"We also maintain communication, relationships, and networking with the local government, such as our recent event, which was organized in collaboration with the Makassar City Culture Office and the Sulawesi Earth Mythology. Moving forward, we hope that after yesterday's inauguration, which was attended by the Head of the South Sulawesi Provincial Tourism Office, in 2026, we will try to have an audience with the Governor of South Sulawesi to discuss several planned HIPAPI South Sulawesi programs."

This networking plays a strategic role in brand building, as it allows HIPAPI to expand its communication reach through third parties. Collaboration with vendors is also crucial, as vendors play a role in recommending MC talent to clients. Vendors' trust in HIPAPI members is a factor that influences client decisions. As stated in an interview excerpt with Fahmi, Project Leader of the Fams Project,

"In my opinion, the MCs at Hipapi South Sulawesi are already quite competent in wedding MCing, as evidenced by their clear organizational structure. Furthermore, to join HIPAPI South Sulawesi, you must register and pass several tests. This makes it very easy for me to convince potential clients to recommend HIPAPI South Sulawesi MCs because of their competence."

This demonstrates that HIPAPI's communication strategy relies not only on direct communication with the public, but also through indirect communication mediated by stakeholders. In other words, HIPAPI's brand is built not only through what the organization says, but also through what others say about it. The partnerships built by Hipapi South Sulawesi not only help promote Hipapi South Sulawesi but also build greater trust among vendors and clients who use the services of Hipapi members. An evaluation of Hipapi South Sulawesi's communication strategy in building a wedding MC brand in Makassar provides insight into the successes and challenges faced in achieving its stated goals. Based on interviews with administrators, members, and external partners, several aspects need to be evaluated to gauge the success of this communication strategy and identify areas for improvement. One of the

challenges faced by Hipapi South Sulawesi is recruiting senior MCs with extensive experience and a good reputation in the wedding industry. The Regional Secretary of the Hipapi South Sulawesi Regional Leadership Council (DPW) explained the importance of having senior MCs within the organization as role models and mentors for new members. Safri explained more fully to researchers in the following interview excerpt:

"How do we hire or attract senior MCs so that we have figures who can serve as role models and role models? With their presence, we can learn directly, not only from books or other media, but also from the experiences of senior MCs, which is crucial. Therefore, this is a challenge for HIPAPI South Sulawesi, and it's very different from Java, where many senior MCs have already joined HIPAPI. Once again, this is HIPAPI South Sulawesi's responsibility to continue to encourage senior MCs to join HIPAPI South Sulawesi."

Seniority among MCs is measured by how long someone has practiced their profession. The senior MC referred to in this study is someone who has worked as an MC for more than 20 years and remains in the wedding industry to this day. Senior MCs play a crucial role in providing direct guidance and real-world experience to new MCs, which is crucial for improving the professional quality of their members. Although Hipapi South Sulawesi has made efforts to attract senior MCs to join, the recruitment process is challenging, given that many senior MCs prefer to work independently or have limited time to devote to the organization. In addition to senior MCs, Hipapi South Sulawesi also needs to attract more talented wedding MCs to increase the organization's recognition and growth, allowing it to contribute to the industry as wedding MCs. As a representative from Simfoni Organizer explained to researchers:

"More and more MCs are being recruited, and they are providing a clear impact or value when MCs join Hipapi, through potential or material contributions. This is an attraction for people to join. Essentially, there is value provided to Hipapi members when MCs join, and this is a reason to join."

Therefore, Hipapi must innovate by offering incentives or additional benefits to senior MCs who join, such as opportunities to share knowledge and expand their professional networks.

An evaluation of the members' visual appearance also revealed discrepancies in the use of attributes that could strengthen the organization's identity. Aulia Anwar, Deputy Chair III of the Regional Leadership Council (DPW) of Hipapi South Sulawesi, stated that one aspect of the communication strategy implemented is the lack of consistency in the appearance of each member. Aulia explained:

"So far, there hasn't been any difference because, in terms of attire, each Hipapi member wears a different MC outfit, and there are no specific attributes worn when hosting events, such as pins. There are attributes provided by the central government, such as pins, but sometimes members forget to wear them."

Uniform attributes in organizations like Hipapi are important for building a collective image and strengthening the organization's visual identity. In an industry that relies heavily on personal branding, appearance is crucial. Hipapi South Sulawesi should standardize the attributes that each member must wear when hosting events, such as uniforms or identity pins, which can strengthen the organization's image in the public eye. This will also help increase recognition from clients and stakeholders that Hipapi members are part of an organized and professional organization. One particularly positive assessment is the improvement in member quality through training and education programs facilitated by Hipapi. Whether through training in speaking skills or knowledge of wedding customs from various regions, these

programs have significantly contributed to the development of member competencies. One of our wedding organizer partners recommended that Hipapi continue developing training programs that can provide greater added value for its members. This was conveyed by Fahmi, Project Director of Fams Project WO.

"For our friends at Hipapi South Sulawesi, we hope to continually upgrade our knowledge of weddings, not only Bugis, Makassar, and Toraja traditional weddings, but also Sundanese, Javanese, and other traditional weddings in Indonesia. Because an MC is the heart of an event, an MC should be competent in several other traditional weddings."

By providing training focused on improving competency and broader cultural knowledge, Hipapi South Sulawesi can improve the quality of its MCs, resulting in increased client trust and more job opportunities. The training program also improved members' ability to adapt to various types of events, both formal and casual, and provided an opportunity to showcase their expertise in various traditional weddings across Indonesia. An evaluation of the communication strategy implemented by Hipapi South Sulawesi in building its wedding MC brand in Makassar revealed that the organization has been successful in some aspects but also faces significant challenges that need to be addressed. Recruiting senior MCs, limited appearance attributes, and expanding external collaborations are some areas that need to be addressed and improved in future communication strategy planning. Furthermore, improving the quality of members through training and developing knowledge of various wedding customs has shown positive results in increasing client trust and promoting the wedding MC profession as a professional and credible one. Expanded collaboration with vendors and the government is also expected to strengthen Hipapi's presence nationally. Overall, Hipapi South Sulawesi needs to continue refining and adapting its communication strategy to maintain its presence and reputation in the highly dynamic wedding industry.

Implications of HIPAPI's Communication Strategy for Increasing Brand Awareness and the Professional Image of Wedding MCs in Makassar

The results of the study indicate that the communication strategy implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi has had significant implications for increasing the organization's brand awareness, particularly among wedding industry players in Makassar. This increase did not occur instantly, but rather through a gradual, consistent, and integrated process between digital communications and organizational activities. Based on interviews, social media, especially Instagram, has become the primary channel for building public awareness of HIPAPI. Informants emphasized that regularly produced content is the primary means of introducing the organization to a wider audience. This is stated in an interview excerpt with Aida Gunawan.

"To join HIPAPI South Sulawesi, you need people who already have a name and a large following on Instagram. This is crucial as one of our methods and strategies for increasing and building the brand of HIPAPI South Sulawesi and its members."

This statement indicates that initial indicators of brand awareness are measured through quantitative aspects, such as the number of followers and the level of interaction with content. However, the increase in brand awareness is not only indicated by numbers, but also by changes in the public's understanding of the organization. Some informants stated that previously, the public, especially prospective brides and grooms, had no clear reference to the existence of an organization that oversees the MC profession. However, with the intensity of HIPAPI's communication efforts, the organization began to be recognized as a professional forum for wedding MCs.

Furthermore, a communication strategy involving members as part of the message distribution system also accelerated the awareness-raising process. Each member's active social media presence indirectly introduced HIPAPI to their audience network. This created a network effect, where information dissemination depended not only on the organization's official accounts but also on members' communication activities. However, the research also showed that the increase in brand awareness was still partial. Among vendors and industry players, HIPAPI South Sulawesi was relatively better known than among general clients. As stated by Fahmi, Project Leader of the Fams Project, in an interview excerpt.

"So far, clients or prospective brides and grooms aren't very familiar with HIPAPI South Sulawesi, but most of them trust us to select and find MCs for their services. I personally choose MCs from among my friends at HIPAPI South Sulawesi."

These findings indicate that HIPAPI's communication strategy remains more effective in reaching the professional segment than the end-consumer segment. This is understandable, given the more intensive interaction between HIPAPI and vendors through activities and collaborations. Furthermore, some clients tend to focus more on individual MCs than on their respective organizations. This was conveyed in an interview excerpt with Jihan Fahira, a bridal client.

"It started with my sister's friendship with one of the MCs, and I also saw her posts every time she hosted a wedding. From her Instagram posts, I saw how kind and professional she was at hosting weddings. Furthermore, I witnessed firsthand how warmly she connected with families while hosting."

This phenomenon indicates that the organization's brand awareness has not been fully internalized in the client decision-making process. In other words, although HIPAPI South Sulawesi is becoming well-known, its presence is not yet a primary factor in selecting an MC. Nevertheless, increasing brand awareness still has important implications. The existence of HIPAPI South Sulawesi as an organization has begun to shape the perception that the MC profession has a specific structure and standards. Therefore, the communication strategy implemented has succeeded in opening public awareness of the organization, although it still needs strengthening to achieve broader and more equitable awareness.

Strengthening the Image of Wedding MC Professionalism

The research results indicate that the most significant implication of HIPAPI South Sulawesi's communication strategy lies in strengthening the image of wedding MC professionalism in Makassar. This image is formed through a combination of organizational communication and the actual experiences of clients and stakeholders. Vendors, as those who interact intensively with MCs, consistently assess the quality of HIPAPI members. As Farid stated in an interview excerpt, "Because MCs are the lifeblood of an event, Bajika always chooses MCs who are members of HIPAPI South Sulawesi because they are highly qualified and have extensive experience. They also frequently expand their knowledge and upgrade themselves, which is why we at Bajika consistently use the services of our MC colleagues from HIPAPI South Sulawesi, who are unquestionably qualified as MCs for every wedding or other event."

This statement demonstrates that HIPAPI's existence has established certain standards that differentiate members from MCs who are not members of the organization. This image of professionalism is not only built through symbolic communication but also through practical work in the field. Clients who use the services of HIPAPI members experience a difference in event management, as expressed by Ainun Natsir, a bridal client, in her interview excerpt.

"Throughout the event, we coordinated very well with the MC and were more engaging in coordinating with the families and event committee. The MC's improvisation while hosting the event was excellent, ensuring a smooth flow. Overall, our event was well-organized, well-directed, and well-coordinated."

This demonstrates that HIPAPI's communication strategy not only creates a positive image but also supports a quality of service that aligns with that image. Furthermore, the members' ability to adapt to various event situations is a crucial factor in shaping the perception of professionalism. As Ainun Natsir noted in her interview,

"The MC always coordinated and improvised without having to change any aspect of our event, and it was presented in a fun, smooth manner. The MC was also able to position himself when leading formal and sacred moments, as well as relaxed moments, in a fun way."

This ability reflects a level of competence that is not only technical, but also communicative and situational. Furthermore, this professional image is also strengthened through the training and development processes conducted by HIPAPI. Training not only improves members' skills but also establishes standards of professional behavior. Thus, the resulting image of professionalism is not simply a result of communication, but a reflection of actual quality. These findings demonstrate that HIPAPI South Sulawesi's communication strategy successfully aligns brand promise and service delivery, which is key to building a strong and sustainable image.

In addition to increasing brand awareness and a professional image, HIPAPI South Sulawesi's communication strategy also has implications for enhancing public trust and the professional value of MCs, both socially and economically. Public trust is the result of the interaction between organizational communication, stakeholder recommendations, and direct client experience. Vendors state that HIPAPI South Sulawesi's membership provides a certain assurance of quality. This is echoed in an interview with Farid from Bajika Wedding Organizer.

"We always recommend and convey to prospective clients that MCs affiliated with HIPAPI South Sulawesi are MCs with unquestionable experience and quality."

This trust is then transferred to clients through vendor recommendations. Furthermore, members also experience increased self-confidence after joining HIPAPI. This is reflected in an interview with Rhifa Madjid, a longtime HIPAPI South Sulawesi member.

"At HIPAPI South Sulawesi, I also saw many MCs from all over Indonesia joining with a variety of extraordinary skills. Secondly, by joining HIPAPI South Sulawesi, I learned to be more professional in terms of communication flow and deadlines with clients, such as when potential clients inquire about rate cards. And thirdly, after joining HIPAPI South Sulawesi, I improved my grooming and appearance, thus gaining more confidence."

This confidence impacts how members interact with clients and manage events, ultimately strengthening their professional image. Another significant implication is the increased economic value of MC services. Members reported an increase in the number of jobs and an increase in service rates. This was conveyed in an interview with Auliah Anwar.

"So, I learned about South Sulawesi customs from my friends at HIPAPI South Sulawesi. Furthermore, after joining HIPAPI South Sulawesi, I got more MC jobs, and my friends at HIPAPI South Sulawesi also often share the work when they are unable to attend or have conflicting schedules."

This was also conveyed by Aida Gunawan in her interview.

"From a personal perspective, the rate card has increased because this was one of our goals in joining HIPAPI South Sulawesi, to increase the rate card."

This demonstrates that HIPAPI South Sulawesi's communication strategy impacts not only perception but also tangible economic value. This increased value can be understood as a result of increased trust and a professional image, which makes HIPAPI members' services more valued in the marketplace. Furthermore, the communication strategy also contributes to the formation of members' professional identities. Members become more aware of the importance of maintaining quality, ethics, and work standards.

HIPAPI South Sulawesi's Communication Strategy in Building a Wedding MC Brand in Makassar

The results of this study indicate that HIPAPI South Sulawesi has implemented various communication strategies to build a wedding MC brand in Makassar, with an emphasis on three main components: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In this context, the implemented communication strategies align with several concepts in Organizational Communication Theory and Brand Image Theory. Organizational Communication Theory emphasizes the importance of managing messages and relationships within and outside the organization to achieve common goals (Nonato et al., 2023; Seeger et al., 2024; Olaniyi et al., 2024). In this study, HIPAPI South Sulawesi successfully demonstrated that structured and systematic communication is key to building a professional image as a wedding MC. HIPAPI uses various communication channels, particularly social media like Instagram, to increase the visibility and awareness of the wedding MC brand among the public. This reflects the basic principle of organizational communication theory, which states that effective communication can strengthen an organization's relationship with its publics, both internally (among members) and externally (among vendors and clients). Furthermore, HIPAPI South Sulawesi also utilizes Social Construction Theory in its efforts to build a wedding MC brand. This theory states that social reality is formed through interaction and communication (Berger & Luckmann, 2023). In this case, HIPAPI shapes public perception of the wedding MC profession through cultural activities and training, which in turn creates a new social construct that links this profession with local cultural preservation and high professionalism. From the perspective of brand image theory, this research aligns with the concept explained by Ahmadian (2023) & Parris & Guzmán (2023), who states that brand image is formed through the experiences and perceptions of various parties involved in brand activities. HIPAPI South Sulawesi, by utilizing training activities and cultural events, successfully created the image of wedding MCs as a serious and organized profession. Furthermore, this brand image is reinforced through communication via social media, where each member acts as a representative of the organization and introduces their brand in a more personal way. This study demonstrates that HIPAPI South Sulawesi focuses not only on commercial aspects in building its brand but also strives to integrate cultural values into its activities. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the concept that organizational communication focused on cultural values and professionalism can build a strong image for a profession, as found in previous studies (Kim & Jung, 2022; Lee & Jang, 2023). However, in the context of brand building, this study also adds a new dimension to brand image theory by emphasizing the role of social media as a primary channel in image building. Previous research has shown that social media serves as a platform for enhancing interaction with audiences (Giertz et al., 2022; Badham & Mykkänen, 2022; Jiang et al., 2024), which is also evident in the communication strategy implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi.

One of the main implications of the South Sulawesi HIPAPI communication strategy is a significant increase in brand awareness among vendors and wedding industry players in Makassar. Research shows that through social media, particularly Instagram, and internal

organizational activities such as training and cultural events, HIPAPI has successfully raised public awareness of its existence as a professional platform for wedding MCs. Looking further into the implications of the South Sulawesi HIPAPI communication strategy, these implications align with Agenda Setting Theory. Agenda Setting Theory (Maurer, 2026) explains that the media plays a crucial role in shaping the public agenda by selecting issues deemed important. South Sulawesi HIPAPI utilized social media platforms to emphasize the importance of the MC role in traditional weddings, successfully influencing audience perceptions of the value and importance of the MC profession. This demonstrates that South Sulawesi HIPAPI has successfully positioned itself as an agent of change in the wedding industry, which in turn has increased public awareness of the importance of having competent MCs.

However, this study also revealed that while brand awareness among vendors and industry players has increased, awareness among clients or prospective brides remains relatively low. This can be seen as a challenge in building broader brand awareness, especially among end consumers. In this context, this study suggests that although social media serves as a primary channel for building brand awareness, more personalized and experience-based communication strategies need to be strengthened. This aligns with findings from previous research showing that clients are more likely to choose MCs based on personal recommendations or firsthand experiences, rather than solely through digital communication (Björling et al., 2022; Sääsäki, 2024; Scherrer et al., 2026).

One significant impact of the HIPAPI South Sulawesi communication strategy is the improved professional image of wedding MCs. The use of social media, training activities, and collaborations with various vendors and government agencies have strengthened the perception that the wedding MC profession is an organized and professional one. The results of this study align with Brand Image Theory, which explains that brand image is formed from the public's experiences and perceptions of elements within the brand (Anand & Kumar, 2023). In this regard, the positive experiences of clients and vendors with MC HIPAPI South Sulawesi have reinforced this positive image. However, this study also highlights the challenges in ensuring a standardized member appearance as part of a communication strategy. The differences in attributes worn by members indicate that visual appearance is an important element in strengthening brand image and requires further standardization. This aligns with previous studies showing that physical appearance can play a significant role in building a professional image (Malik et al., 2024). Therefore, consistent appearance standards can help strengthen an organization's visual identity and increase public recognition.

The economic impact of the communication strategy implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi is also quite significant. Members reported increased employment and increased rates for MC services after joining the organization. This finding aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which states that organized social relationships can generate economic benefits for the individuals involved (Davis et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2023; Rajâa & Mekkaoui, 2025). In this regard, the trust built through HIPAPI's communication strategy not only contributes to a better professional image but also increases the economic value of the services provided by its members. This research shows that the wedding MC profession, initially viewed as a side job or mere entertainment, is now beginning to be appreciated as a profession requiring high standards and competence. Therefore, HIPAPI South Sulawesi's communication strategy has succeeded in building public trust that extends beyond social aspects to the economic value its members can derive.

This research demonstrates that the communication strategy of HIPAPI South Sulawesi in building the wedding MC brand in Makassar aligns with Organizational Communication

Theory and Brand Image Theory, as well as previous research recognizing the importance of social media in building brand awareness. By utilizing digital platforms and organizing cultural activities involving the community, HIPAPI South Sulawesi has successfully promoted and developed an image of professionalism among wedding MCs. However, several challenges remain, such as expanding brand awareness among clients and ensuring standardized member attributes. Overall, the results of this research develop and strengthen communication theories by providing empirical evidence on how structured communication can influence the perception and image of the profession, while simultaneously generating positive economic impacts for its members.

Conclusion

This study analyzes the communication strategy implemented by HIPAPI South Sulawesi in building the professional image and brand of wedding MCs in Makassar. The findings show that HIPAPI South Sulawesi effectively utilizes organizational communication, social media, training programs, and stakeholder collaboration to increase brand awareness, strengthen professional legitimacy, and promote the wedding MC profession as part of cultural preservation. The organization successfully builds a positive image through Instagram content, internal activities, and partnerships with vendors and government institutions. The study also reveals that HIPAPI contributes to establishing professional standards related to communication competence, ethics, and appearance. However, while the communication strategy effectively reaches vendors and wedding industry actors, public awareness among clients and prospective brides remains relatively limited. Therefore, more audience-centered and experience-based communication strategies are needed to strengthen broader public recognition. This study contributes to communication and branding scholarship by demonstrating the importance of collective organizational branding within the creative-service industry context.

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