

The Role of Influencers and Digital Content as a Marketing Strategy During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

One of the impacts felt by entrepreneurs during the Covid-19 pandemic was the decline in the economy and business. In this modern era, social media has become a basic need for society. Therefore, business people must optimize digital marketing strategies. One way that is considered the most effective is using the services of an influencer. The purpose of this research is to find out how big the role of influencers and digital content is in increasing a business. This type of research is narrative qualitative research and data collection method by interview. The results of this study are entrepreneurs admit that influencers and digital content are very influential on their online business. Especially during the covid 19 pandemic like now, both in terms of turnover and followers.

Keywords— Influencers, Digital Content, Instagram, Covid-19

Abstrak

Salah satu dampak yang dirasakan oleh para pengusaha saat pandemic Covid-19 adalah kemerosotan dalam dunia ekonomi dan bisnis. Di era modern ini media sosial sudah seperti kebutuhan pokok bagi masyarakat. Maka dari itu para pelaku bisnis harus mengoptimalkan strategi pemasaran digital. Salah satu cara yang dianggap paling efektif adalah menggunakan jasa influencer. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui seberapa besar peran influencer dan konten digital dalam menaikkan suatu bisnis. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif naratif dan metode pengumpulan data dengan wawancara. Adapun hasil dari penelitian ini adalah pengusaha mengakui bahwa influencer dan konten digital sangat berpengaruh pada bisnis online mereka. Apalagi di saat pandemi covid 19 seperti sekarang ini, baik dari hal omset maupun followers.

Kata Kunci: Influencer, Konten Digital, Instagram, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic that is currently sweeping the world has had a significant impact on many aspects of life. One of them is in the field of economics and business. The impact that looks very real is that business people have difficulty marketing their products because the government has recently implemented social restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. At this time, like it or not, business people have to rack their brains so that their business can continue to survive. And currently, the most recommended strategy is an online strategy which is highly expected to be able to continue to turn the

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wheels of the existing economy. With this strategy, there are many advantages that we will be able to deliver, including saving on marketing/promotion costs, wider market reach, and also right on target according to the market we want to reach, and the most important thing is to be able to increase sales of the products we sell. According to data from Hootsuite.com (We Are Social) in January 2020 that as many as 4,450 billion people in the world use the internet and 3,800 billion people are active in social media. Indonesia also contributes to the number of internet users, namely as much as 64% of the entire population of Indonesia itself and almost all internet users must use social media, namely 160 million people. Some of the platforms that are often accessed are YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. So with the many active users of social media in Indonesia, business people who use it can take advantage of it. That is by making marketing strategies in digital form and also what is currently trending, namely using the services of influencers to promote the goods or services they trade. An influencer in the English dictionary is someone who can influence other people. According to coil.com, influencers are people who have a large audience or followers on social media, they also have a great influence on their followers such as celebrities, artists, and YouTubers. These influencers are used to brand businesses or services to certain target consumers. Seeing this fact, it is necessary to make a deeper observation of the role of influencers and also digital content that is used as a marketing strategy. The social media chosen is Instagram, because on this platform there are a lot of people who use the services of influencers for their business, it is also the number 4 most active social media platform in Indonesia. The purpose of this observation is to find out that the role of influencers and digital content in this COVID-19 period is useful and needed

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is the decline in the business and economic world. With this pandemic, traders or entrepreneurs must be able to find alternative solutions to market their products or services to consumers. Business people must be able to optimize marketing through the online sector and digital branding as a means of communication with consumers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has also begun to consider online marketing as a solution that can be applied to overcome the tax deficit, which results in a slowdown in the economic sector and a decline in profit revenues. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Covid-19 has an impact on the sustainability of community businesses. Entrepreneurs have to rack their brains to think of the right solution to increase their business (Novianti, 2019). According to 2019 statistical data (Statistics, 2019), the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency conducted a data collection of 3,504 e-commerce users in 101 regions in all provinces in Indonesia. From these data, we can conclude that only about 15.08% of all people have used e-commerce businesses. If seen, this is in contrast to people who make a business without using e-commerce, which is 84.92%. By looking at this data, the use of e-commerce in Indonesia is still very low. In this digital era, public relations not only emphasize message processing and relationship management, but also the practice of supervising the online community as a resource. This has created a new field of work in the workforce, including strategies on social media, online community management, and digital maintenance management (Novianti, 2020). Digital public relations can also be involved in disseminating various kinds of information such as publishing online news broadcasts or updating any matter related to the organization to stakeholders. In addition, social media has also helped public relations activities in the field of publicity (Joo & Teng, 2016). It can be

concluded that there are a lot of e-commerce users in Indonesia, so it can be used to maintain and improve people's businesses because there are quite a lot of users. But in contrast to people who use e-commerce to create a business, which is based on the data above, only a few.

Social media is a means for consumers to share and receive information in the form of text, images, sound, and video with each other and with companies or vice versa (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Social media at this time has a very important role in terms of the progress of a business. One of them is Instagram, Instagram is a frequent application that is very often used by people to share photos with other users. Instagram consists of an individualized organization "insta" derived from a customized "instant" structure, such as the polaroid camera which in its time was known as "instant photos". Instagram can also display multiple photos instantly. While the word "gram" comes from the individualized structure "wire", Instagram is a very popular place to share photos and videos. Aham Instagram was recently bought by Facebook. This software is recorded to have 130 million active users every month. It can be concluded that social media can be used to carry out promotions to the public about the products they sell easily. One of the social media that is very easy to use for promotion is Instagram because Instagram was created to share photos with other people easily. So that Instagram is considered to be the best promotion tool for now.

The development of information and communication technology has been going very fast since the emergence of social media. Social media has now become a lifestyle in sharing interactions and discussions both between communities and between individuals. The interaction that was originally vertical became level, from one direction to two directions, from "one to many" now to "numerous to many". With these changes, the approach to consumers must also be slightly changed, one of which is the use of social media that is guided by how to create communication and commitment with consumers. By utilizing social media properly and correctly, it can be used as a communication medium that is very profitable for companies and consumers. This is in line with millennials who are currently in their productive age and have a lifestyle that is familiar with social media and the web. With this new habit, companies, both small and large, are flocking to expand their advertising strategy to take full advantage of social media. According to Lim *et al.*, (2017) social media influencers have a positive impact on purchase intention. However, Johansen & Guldvik (2017) stated that influencers do not influence purchase intention. Sari *et al.*, (2016) described that the trust of consumers has a significant effect on people's buying interest. Rebelo (2017) states that trustworthiness is the best dimension in source credibility to be able to influence purchase intention. Informa *et al.*, (2008) stated that trustworthiness has a positive and significant relationship to purchase intention.

Che & Cheung (2017) stated that trustworthiness has a very strong relationship with consumer purchase intention. However, the results of research conducted by Ani & Kusumawati (2014) state that trustworthiness, in general, is not enough to contribute to increasing buying interest. Based on the opinion above, some say that influencers contribute to increasing people's buying interest and some say that influencers do not have a big impact on increasing people's buying interest. But back again with which influencers are hired to promote their business, for example using an influencer that is on the rise, the public's interest in buying the products sold will increase because of the impact of public interest on their idol. On the other hand, if the influencer used is not well known, it will not have a major impact on the people's purchasing power for the products being sold.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative narrative method. This research is one form that is quite distinctive in qualitative, in its implementation it usually focuses on the study of one person or individual and also how that individual interprets his experience through the stories told (Cresswell, 2012). Then for data collection, namely by interviewing the person concerned. According to Esteberg in Sugiyono (2015), an interview is a meeting conducted by two people to exchange information and ideas by way of question and answer, so from the results of the question and answer it can be narrowed down to a conclusion from a particular topic. And the interviews conducted in this study were semi-structured, meaning that the interviewer had prepared a list of questions and topics to be asked before the interview began.

The process of analyzing this article is to conduct structured interviews by giving several questions to the informants and will be answered by the informants through stories of experiences that have been experienced during their business. After getting answers to each question, the researcher will conclude the results of the interview so that it becomes an appropriate result. Interviews for this research were conducted via WhatsApp with a local online shop based in Madiun, namely "arv.stuff". This online shop was chosen because one of its marketing strategies is to use influencer services on Instagram.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of social media is now not only seen as a means to explore anything from the outside world but has developed towards the business world. For example, social media can be a means for marketing and also get reviews of products or services that are being marketed to attract customers. Like during the COVID-19 pandemic, marketing strategies through digital content are in great demand. Like the interview, we did on one of the online business actors on Instagram, namely "arv.stuff". He said that the existence of this pandemic did not have much effect on the online shop he owned.

"The name of selling must have ups and downs, but thank God this pandemic doesn't have much effect on turnover it is increasing over time. The important thing is to be consistent & keep trying"

Then for the strategy that is carried out, namely using Influencer marketing. In research (Novi, Alexander, 2018) it is said that influencer marketing is seen as one of the best strategies to attract consumer interest when marketing with social media that utilizes social media followers owned by an influencer. An influencer can create a good image of the product so that consumers feel safe to buy a product. And also another benefit that can be obtained after using the services of an influencer is that the followers from the online shop increase, which means that the more followers, the more marketing coverage from the online shop.

"...Followers are getting worse, orders are also increasing, there are also many, for example, customers who request the same as the ones I endorsed into the celebgram, then for followers it usually goes up by around 100-300 followers"

The way that influencers generally use to review products from online shops is by making videos or photos that will be uploaded on their Instagram. And the price set for each post varies depending on what the online shop wants. But usually reviews in the form of videos will be more expensive than in the form of photos. Also, the price that is set depends on the number of followers of an influencer and

also the level of popularity. The more popular the influencer is, it is hoped that the business of the online shop will be increasingly known by many people.

"There is a way to promote them from a snapgram review, so they honestly review products from my olshop, some also upload feeds on Instagram. The price range for endorsement services is 100-300 thousand rupiah, depending on how popular the influencer is and also the packages that have been provided by the influencer itself."

There is no big impact before and after the pandemic. However, a business must have ups and downs, we must be able to take advantage of the opportunities and trends that exist today.

"I sell a lot of things, my main product right now is gift box and glasses. But I also sell strap masks, outfits, etc. Follow the trend. There must be ups and downs in the name of selling, but thank God this pandemic doesn't have much effect on turnover it is increasing over time. The important thing is to be consistent & keep trying."

Online marketing is one of the effective ways that can be applied during this Pandemic. Due to restrictions on going out of the house, people prefer to buy any equipment via digital media, especially Instagram. This is in line with research conducted by (Hawangga and Sutarna, 2020) which says that online marketing strategies are the most effective strategies nowadays because they are easily accessible anywhere and anytime, especially with a very varied selection of goods.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that the role of influencers in influencing society in social media is very large. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, which requires people to limit their activities outside the house, let alone shopping. Online shop owners must have a good digital marketing strategy to take advantage of this opportunity. One of them uses the services of an influencer who will increase engagement from their Instagram account and also increase turnover. Even though using this service you have to spend capital but in the end, the capital will become a profit.

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