

Tiktok Micro Influencer as a New Communication Marketing Tactic in Building Brand Equity

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ABSTRAK

Marketing influencer merupakan fenomena terkini yang terjadi akibat era pemasaran 4.0. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengelaborasi mikro influencer Tiktok sebagai taktik komunikasi di bidang pemasaran untuk membangun ekuitas merek di WYAH Art & Creative Space Ubud. Metode kualitatif digunakan sebagai desain penelitian khususnya dengan mengadaptasi model studi kasus. Subyeknya adalah satu mikro influencer Tiktok, 2 pengunjung, dan 2 staf pemasaran WYAH Art & Creative Space Ubud. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan melakukan observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen melalui lembar observasi dan pedoman wawancara. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis secara kuantitatif dengan menggunakan Analisis Data Kualitatif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mikro influencer Tiktok dapat digunakan sebagai pemimpin opini dalam komunikasi pemasaran. Getaran orang normal yang ditunjukkan mikro influencer Tiktok menyampaikan pesan secara natural. Taktik komunikasi pemasaran dengan mikro influencer Tiktok dapat digunakan secara gratis untuk mengkomunikasikan dan membangun ekuitas merek WYAH Ubud melalui penciptaan kesadaran di seluruh komponen mikro influencer Tiktok. Mereka dapat mengkomunikasikan brand image WYAH Ubud dan menciptakan awareness yang tinggi di kalangan pengguna Tiktok. Secara berkelanjutan, taktik ini membangun ekuitas merek yang kuat untuk merek-mereknya, termasuk WYAH Ubud.

ABSTRACT

Marketing influencer is a recent phenomenon occurs due to the marketing era 4.0. This study aimed at elaborating Tiktok micro influencer as a communication tactic in marketing field to build brand equity at WYAH Art & Creative Space Ubud. Qualitative method was used as a research design particularly by adapting case study model. The subjects were one Tiktok micro influencer, 2 visitors, and 2 marketing staffs of WYAH Art & Creative Space Ubud. The data were collected by conducting observation, interview, and document analysis through the use of observation sheet and interview guide. The collected data was analysed quantitatively by using Qualitative Data Analysis. The findings showed that Tiktok micro influencer could be used as an opinion leader in marketing communications. The vibes of normal people shown by the Tiktok micro influencer delivered the message naturally. Marketing communication tactics with Tiktok micro influencer could be used free of charge to communicate and build a brand equity for WYAH Ubud through creating awareness in all components of Tiktok micro influencer. They could communicate the brand image of WYAH Ubud and create high awareness among Tiktok users. Continuously, this tactic built a strong brand equity for its brands, including WYAH Ubud.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the newcomers MSME brands in the coffee shop business is WYAH Art & Creative Space Ubud. This coffee shop has a marketing communication objective, namely building brand equity "While You Are Here" (WYAH). WYAH started operating on 01 September 2021 after the Covid-19 Pandemic. At the same time, many business people in Bali are recovering from their businesses which were hampered due to the Covid-19 Pandemic (Bhaskara & Filimonau, 2021; Shimizu, 2021). Thus, WYAH Ubud does not only have to compete with existing coffee shops but also with other new coffee shops. It is not easy for a business to build brand equity in the midst of increasing competition for similar products. One of the important things in it is how marketers determine the right marketing communication tactics that will be delivered to predetermined targets (Fill & Turnbull, 2016; Jannah & Moefad, 2019).

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WYAH Ubud realizes that there is an opportunity that has emerged after the Covid-19 Pandemic with the existence of a trend of work from cafes and healing places which are currently viral on social media, especially TikTok. WYAH Ubud marketers also know the selling power of the Ubud area, namely Balinese cultural values are still strong and as a beautiful village that is able to attract tourists to come visit (Malik, 2016; Mananda & Dewi, 2018). By considering the aspects above, WYAH Ubud must be able to position its brand specifically (brand image) to reach its target market and create brand awareness by highlighting its brand's unique selling point. In marketing communications, it is said that one way a brand can use to create awareness and image is by carrying out promotions that are tailored to the marketing goals of a brand. This will then be related to how the selection of communicators and messages will be conveyed to the target market (Batra & Keller, 2016; Lukitaningsih, 2013).

Taking into account the situation of WYAH Ubud, the use of TikTok micro influencers as a marketing communication tactic should be considered in helping to create brand equity which includes brand awareness and brand image of WYAH Ubud. Previous research stated that apart from using marketing communication tactics with advertisements, micro influencers can also be used to help brands create brand awareness and brand image because they gain the trust of their audience and followers (Hudders et al., 2021; Sammis et al., 2015). The authenticity and intimacy that exists between followers and influencers then becomes an added value for micro influencers to build audience trust compared to macro influencers (Athaya, 2021; Jun & Yi, 2020).

Furthermore, an article wrote that marketing tactics using TikTok Micro Influencers have improved and are superior to other marketing tactics in 2022 (Hudders & Lou, 2022; Taylor, 2020). This is due to the belief of netizens who think that brand recommendations provided by a TikTok micro influencer have better message credibility and are able to positively influence netizens to see and use certain brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Esteban-Millat, et al., 2020). Similar research explains that TikTok micro influencers focus on a particular niche or niches and are generally considered to be industry experts or topic specialists (Haenlein et al., 2020; Nurhandayani et al., 2019). TikTok micro influencers have stronger relationships than celebrities and other types of influencers. This fact is shown by an article which writes that the average connection between TikTok micro influencers and their followers is ten times higher than endorsed advertisements by celebrities (Abidin, 2021; Janssen et al., 2022).

According to 2021 data, as many as 92% of business actors who use TikTok micro influencers to promote their brands have had a positive impact (Harrigan et al., 2021; Leung, F. F. et al., 2022). They grow because of changes in the behavior of netizens on social media, who currently find it difficult to trust a brand's communication messages conveyed by celebrities or mega influencers. This marketing communication tactic using TikTok micro influencers allows influencers to generate relationships with their followers using seemingly organic content. Seeing these facts, TikTok micro influencers can then be chosen as a new tactic for business actors to reach more specific markets and market niches (Phua et al., 2017; Sook Kwon et al., 2014). Thus, the popularity of marketing communication tactics using TikTok micro influencers can be utilized to assist them in achieving their marketing goals.

To win a competition in the market, a brand, WYAH Ubud is no exception, must be able to create a marketing communication that can build brand equity through creating awareness and image of the brand. Brand awareness can be interpreted as netizens' awareness of the existence of a brand in their minds when they think about a particular brand category (recognition) and how a brand becomes the name most netizens remember (recall) (Fitrianna & Aurinawati, 2020; Ghadani et al., 2022). Taking into account the competitive business environment after the Covid-19 Pandemic, creating a brand image is important to determine brand positioning in the minds of consumers. Brand image can be created through a collection of information about the brand and experiences that have been felt by consumers about a particular brand. Through the discussion above, it becomes important then for WYAH Ubud to consider the right marketing communication tactics in creating brand awareness and brand image in order to build its own brand.

Marketing communications play an important role in shaping knowledge of a brand which enables the formation of positive brand awareness and brand image (Batra & Keller, 2016; Lukitaningsih, 2013). Furthermore, for a potential customer, brand equity can provide a value in strengthening their understanding of the information process, fostering confidence in purchasing or using a particular brand. In the theory of two-step flow communication states that personal influence exerted by others usually plays a more important role in everyday decision making than information obtained from the mass media. This statement implies that the position of the TikTok micro influencer is as an opinion leader in conveying information on social media which can be utilized properly to consider the sharing of information which leads to persuasion of followers on social media (Hudders et al., 2021; Sammis et al., 2015).

This study exists to refute the perception that emerged through research that the criteria for opinion leaders in social media-based marketing have a large number of followers (Park, 2013; Park & Kaye,

2017). Through this view, the emergence of the TikTok micro influencer in this case seems to provide a new assumption related to the opinion leader criteria in marketing communications. Even though the number of followers is not that many, quantitatively, TikTok micro influencers are able to have a closer relationship intensity. This statement has been mentioned several times in the previous paragraphs. Considering this, researchers try to investigate further about the emergence of the TikTok micro influencer as a new tactic in marketing communications to achieve the goals of a brand.

In addition, based on several sources of articles and books, it is said that other influencer marketing (besides micro influencers) will require high marketing costs compared to micro influencers whose marketing costs are relatively cheaper (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Silalahi, 2021). However, there is another aspect that needs attention, namely how the TikTok micro influencers control their content messages so that they are able to attract awareness from their followers and form a brand image. This is because in this marketing communication tactic, marketers from a business do not interfere much in terms of delivering content that is carried out (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Kay et al., 2020). Marketers give freedom to TikTok micro influencers to be creative according to their own style. Of course, again this tactic has differences from other marketing communication tactics which usually require supervision and all marketing concepts are mostly discussed with marketers.

Marketing communication tactics using influencer marketing can indeed help promote a brand (Takada et al., 2009; Ye et al., 2021). This was confirmed in a study conducted by previous research that influencer marketing, especially those with a smaller size or often referred to as micro influencers, are seen as having more credibility and knowledge by their followers (Janssen et al., 2022; Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Fernández Giordano, et al., 2020). This means that as followers or target market, they are willing to follow the recommendations of the micro marketing. Furthermore, the existence of micro influencers is used in the acquisition of certain target markets in promoting brands. Thus, further research is deemed necessary regarding TikTok micro influencers as a marketing communication tactic, especially in helping to build brand equity.

Over time, the existence of micro influencers has been found on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and not so much on TikTok (Barta et al., 2022; Yang & Ha, 2021). In addition, research that raises the micro influencer phenomenon is indeed an interesting topic of discussion. The article written by similar research opens up space for the next researcher where according to researchers the types of industries that use micro influencers vary (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Silalahi, 2021). Thus, to expand the scope of micro influencers in future studies, further research is needed regarding the development of influencers in the Indonesian market. This will certainly be an interesting research landscape because Indonesia's social media penetration is one of the highest in the world. This means that MSME actors can take advantage of the digital revolution which offers new ways for consumers to communicate brands on social media (Kallevig et al., 2022; Ranfagni et al., 2021). Therefore, in this study the researchers tried to focus on micro influencers as a marketing communication tactic using TikTok media which the researchers then called TikTok micro influencers.

Several previous studies have focused on identifying micro influencers, both in terms of their characteristics, the effectiveness of their use of a brand, to their collaboration with other brands as a tool for promotion (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Leung et al., 2022; Maddox, 2022). In addition, the article also explains several marketing communication tactics that can be used to build brand equity, such as: advertising and promotion, interactive marketing, organizing events, and telephone marketing (Kallevig et al., 2022; Nyilasy et al., 2013). However, with the emergence of the TikTok micro influencer, further research is needed regarding its use as a marketing communication tactic in building brand equity. Through a review of previous research as well as several references to articles, books, and news coverage through online media, this research will focus on research in the form of TikTok micro influencers as a marketing communication tactic in building brand equity.

2. METHODS

Qualitative method was used as a research design of this study by adapting case-study model. This study aimed at improving the understandings towards the real-contemporary communication phenomena (Daymon & Holloway, 2008). The uniqueness of this case is placed on the utilization of influencer marketing in a different way, such the use of TikTok micro influencer as a communication marketing tactic in the competitive environment of similar merk or brand. WYAH Art and Creative Space Ubud utilizes the existence of TikTok micro influencer as a communicator to build brand equity. The data were gained through observation, document analysis, and in-depth interview. The TikTok influencer, marketer, and two visitors at WYAH Art and Creative Space Ubud were selected as informants by using purposive sampling

technique. There were several instruments used in this study, such as; interview draft and observation sheets. The obtained data were analyzed qualitatively by using Qualitative Data Analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Marketing communication tactics can be interpreted as a method used by a brand marketer as an effort to inform the brand to the target market. In other words, communication tactics are a way to achieve a goal. When a brand has a goal to maintain its existence in the midst of the onslaught of similar brands such as WYAH Ubud, then the brand's marketers must think of a more effective tactical opportunity. Through interviews with WYAH marketers, Mega Dyah Utami, revealed:

"I want to create a new logic where it's not me who talks about my own brand but I want my brand to be talked about by other people..." (Interview with Mega Dyah Utami, August 2022)

This statement assumes that WYAH Ubud's marketing communication tactics are a tactic where it seems as if there is a communicator from an external business who deliberately communicates his brand. Thus, WYAH Ubud also sees an opportunity through social media TikTok and generation Z and millennials who like to create content to upload. Through this, WYAH Ubud marketers then highlight the experience side in each menu offering and highlight the charm of a tree house building that resembles a beehive which is the signature of WYAH Ubud to build their brand image. Marketer WYAH Ubud also said that, if we want our brand to be discussed by netizens, then we really have to be able to present something different.

In addition, determining the communicator to serve as an opinion leader in this tactic is also important. In this case, the TikTok micro influencer is described as someone who is able to provide behavior changes to their followers, in the form of not knowing to knowing, from not liking to liking and so on. The application of opinion leaders in marketing communications is used to form a WYAH Ubud public opinion. In practice, TikTok micro influencers are used in marketing communications to convey messages to the target market. In WYAH Ubud itself, the marketing targets on TikTok's social media are generation Z and millennials who really have an interest in the atmosphere of the place and the experience offered by WYAH Ubud through signature menus that cannot be found in other coffee shops. This is what the TikTok micro influencers then convey to their followers.

It should be recalled that an effective marketing communication is able to initiate dialogue and build relationships with the target market. TikTok and the micro influencers that have been selected by WYAH Ubud are then given full trust in delivering this message. In line with this statement, an article states that micro influencers have their own way of telling stories to netizens. They have their own way of communicating and conveying messages to their followers to convince them of a brand. The interesting thing that researchers found is that marketers do not take part in determining the message. Even so, TikTok micro influencers are still able to communicate the brand well. This can be seen in the video uploaded by Purna Yasa which received 289.4K views with 22.5K likes and 431 comments. This then eliminates a stigma where marketing content must be carefully conceptualized and discussed in two directions. Apart from that, the influence of the algorithm on TikTok also makes the delivery of messages wrapped in entertainment nuances and ignoring promotional frills able to attract more awareness from netizens.

There are two interesting points in the results of this study regarding the factors for conveying messages by TikTok micro influencers which can be used as a main point. TikTok micro influencers can be used as tactics in marketing communications, including: (a) Matching Influencers with Brands. A marketing communication tactic carried out by a TikTok micro influencer can reach the target market effectively because they control a certain market niche (Phua et al., 2017). Then, followers of the TikTok micro influencer usually have behaviors or interests that match those of the influencer. If an influencer has content that is relevant to a brand, the target market will indirectly match the brand, because they follow the influencer. For example, WYAH Ubud finally chose Purna Yasa with a background from a local Balinese generation Z who is a food and travel TikTok micro influencer. The suitability between the chosen influencer and the brand will create an impression of a naturalist relationship that is formed when the influencer creates content about a brand. In addition, the "ordinary person" persona displayed by TikTok micro influencers makes followers trust the recommendations provided; (b) Message delivery style. According to the data, the compatibility of influencers with brands is not the main factor used to be taken into consideration in choosing or influencing the message delivery process by TikTok micro influencers. Based on a statement via Mega Dyah Utami, a Purna Yasa follower and one of the visitors also said that they also did not rule out trusting a recommendation given from a TikTok micro influencer who had no brand

compatibility. The main factor for them until they finally agree to a recommendation from a micro influencer is due to the naturalism factor displayed in every content by a TikTok micro influencer. They convey messages as if they are not the people appointed directly by marketers from a brand to promote a brand. Rather they are people who voluntarily communicate a brand. On an ongoing basis, this tactic also allows a brand to have strong equity.

Furthermore, based on observations, TikTok is able to send personalized recommendations to each of its users via the for your page menu. If a content passes on this menu, the engagement will increase. In other words, netizens who are not part of the followers of certain influencers can still be exposed to content that passes on the users for your page. It's no wonder that TikTok has become a popular media in recent years in marketing. With this fact, collaborating with micro influencers with TikTok is a unique and at the same time profitable idea for marketers to create awareness through the viral effect due to the for your page algorithm presented by TikTok.

There are several ways mentioned by Shimp in his book regarding tactics that can be used to build brand equity. However, in this research there is a new point found that to build a brand equity a brand can make people (micro influencers) communicate the brand for free, through creating awareness and image of a particular brand. It was said that because the barter method that was carried out between Purna Yasa and WYAH Ubud was still able to run optimally. Then, WYAH Ubud also does not deny that through Purna Yasa their products can be better known by netizens. This can be seen in the video uploaded by Purna Yasa who received 289.4K views with 22.5K likes and 431 comments.

The fact of the existence of the TikTok micro influencer then raises a new marketing communication tactic opportunity that can be used to help brands slowly occupy the top position in the minds of consumers (top of mind). An extraordinary combination of TikTok social media and the type of influencer marketing that has few followers but has a big impact on the smooth process and marketing objectives carried out by WYAH Ubud.

Discussion

According to previous research there are many ways that can be used by marketers to add value to a brand to achieve strong brand equity, some of which are by developing appropriate marketing communication tactics to create brand awareness and brand image (Pham & Gammoh, 2015; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). This is of course very beneficial for a brand, when a brand has strong brand equity, it allows the brand to compete with other brands. One way is through determining the right marketing communication tactics, because a good marketing communication in its implementation will have a positive impact on the brand being marketed (Batra & Keller, 2016; Lukitaningsih, 2013).

Shimp also added that an effort or effort made to build brand equity directly intersects with efforts to build a positive brand in the eyes of consumers (brand image). In addition, creating awareness of a brand is also able to deliver the brand to have strong brand equity (Pinto & Paramita, 2021; Wibowo et al., 2023). In the previous discussion, it is assumed that there is an opportunity that arises through TikTok micro influencers as a marketing communication tactic to help build brand equity (Hudders et al., 2021; Sammis et al., 2015). This can be seen in WYAH Ubud in its aim to maintain brand existence by utilizing TikTok micro influencers to increase awareness among netizens.

If it is linked to the theory of two-stage flow communication, it is in accordance with the instinctive way of working of a TikTok micro influencer who is seen as having more credibility and knowledge so that he can serve as an opinion leader for his followers. In addition, the existence of TikTok micro influencers is used in the acquisition of certain target markets in communicating the brand (Janssen et al., 2022; Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Fernández Giordano, et al., 2020). The authenticity and intimacy that exists between followers and influencers then becomes an added value for micro influencers to build audience trust compared to macro influencers (Athaya, 2021; Jun & Yi, 2020).

Marketing communication that occurs between brands and netizens is not directly obtained through any mass media, but through the TikTok micro influencer, which means that their presence is considered as a messenger trusted by netizens to communicate a brand. Even though it has limited coverage due to the small number of followers, the intimacy that occurs between TikTok micro influencers and their followers can have a persuasive effect (Athaya, 2021; Jun & Yi, 2020). Based on the results of the research that has been described, marketing communication tactics using TikTok micro influencers can be used as a tactic to build brand equity by helping to form perceptions in the minds of consumers about a brand, so as to be able to add a value proposition that will have an impact on brand image.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and analysis it was concluded that the TikTok micro influencer's marketing communication tactics have been able to build WYAH Ubu's brand equity through creating awareness and brand image. The findings of this study refer to this marketing communication tactic, opinion leaders in marketing do not have to be someone who has high followers. However, it is considered that there is a closeness between the opinion leader and his followers.

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