

## **Social Media Strategy: The Use of Social Media in Stationery Business to Reach Gen Z**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the creative industry world, many start-up stationery businesses have started to emerge which still have an audience base. The main target market is Gen Z teenagers who are actively using social media. To be able to reach Gen Z, the right marketing strategy is needed to create brand awareness of the stationary business. Therefore, it is necessary to study literature on social media strategies, brand communication and Gen Z behavior in using social media. From the results of the literature study, it can be said that social media content that is simple, relevant, and repeatable is effective in building relationships between stationery and consumers on social media. It is hoped that with optimal use of social media, brand awareness of the stationary business will also increase.

Keywords: Social Media Strategy, Gen Z, Brand Communication

### **INTRODUCTION**

Creative industry in Indonesia has been developing recently. This is supported by the evidence from the Creative Economy Agency in the report by OPUS Outlook 2019 in which creative economy sector holds as big contribution as 7,44% and will continue to grow each year (Munaf, 2018). Stationery business which is a part of the creative economy sector is developing rapidly as well. This can be seen by the blooming of stationery businesses such as Palett.es, Happy Bits of Joy, and

Matchalove Art which have started to sell and promote their products through social media, specifically, Instagram.

This surely has included stationery business within the *Red Ocean* condition. *Red Ocean* is a market condition where plenty of businesses have sold similar products which require business owners to tightly compete with others. This condition makes it hard to create new strategies which are new to competitors (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015). To be able to compete with other business owners, this condition requires stationery businesses to implement product differentiation or lowering production cost as much as possible combined with marketing strategies which are in line with the target market.

It is for sure necessary to raise this topic since marketing strategies cannot be generalized for all users. The majority of stationery business consumers which are currently dominated by the Gen Z youths have turned previous marketing strategies targeting the older generation to be less relevant. The current generation have got reservations with *hard-selling* strategies because they are growing in the internet age, therefore, they have had enough with open promotional campaigns. To reach Gen Z whose lives cannot be separated from social media, marketing strategies which integrate social media and *brand communication* are needed.

Hence, the purpose of this literature review is to study the appropriate marketing strategies used to reach the Gen Z target market in order to build *brand awareness stationery* business. To determine the intended marketing strategies, this literature review will analyze social media strategies which can benefit *stationery* businesses intending to market their products through social media. Points discussed include start-up business differentiation, Gen Z behavior in using social media, and the right marketing strategies to reach Gen Z.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This literature review is conducted to investigate how *start-up stationery* businesses could reach Gen Z through social media. *Start-up stationery* business

mentioned above is a company that is in the initial stages of business focusing on selling kinds of stationery such as stickers, books, notes, calendars, and the like. To answer the aforementioned question, it is first necessary to better comprehend social media strategies. Therefore, methods used in the investigation is literature review, which could provide insights and perspectives on both theories and studies conducted by previous researchers (Snyder, 2019).

Research method used is qualitative method focusing on efforts to describe and analyze the available data gathered from various literature on marketing strategies through social media. Data sources used include textbooks and journals selected based on relevant issues such as *start-up* business, Gen Z behaviors in utilizing social media as well as *brand communication*.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Business Differentiation**

Before discussing the external side of business (marketing strategies), it is first necessary to discuss the internal part of business so that the brand could be recognized by the consumers. It is true that the market share of stationery business falls into the *Red Ocean* condition which requires business owners to implement differentiation. However, it is often the case that novice businessmen are snared in one of the *Red Ocean Trap* where they are too focused on implementing product differentiation (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015) whereas not every business could successfully do so. They carry out differentiation from the overall business model which could be seen from the way they approach until they deliver the products to *customers* (Bhargava & Herman, 2020). Below are *The Five Major Axes of Differentiation* which could be adopted by a *start-up* business:

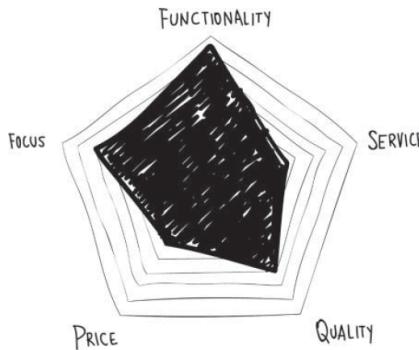


Figure 1. *The Five Major Axes of Differentiation*  
Source: Bhargava & Herman (2020)

- *Functionality: features of products being offered.*
- *Service: what is being offered aside from the products, including assistance given to customers.*
- *Quality: quality of product performance.*
- *Price: Price offered when compared to those of the competitors*
- *Focus: focused on those that can add to the uniqueness of business, from geographical, demographical, packaging to delivery aspects*

Differentiation factors of business could be determined from *brand equity* from the starting point of the business. *Brand equity* can develop perspectives on which marketing strategies are suitable and can add value of business (Keller, 1993). Therefore, before designing the marketing strategies, it would be better for a *brand start-up stationery* to determine a suitable *brand equity*.

In addition, stationery business is a B2C business (*Business to Customer*)

that uses *Customer-Based Brand Equity*. To be able to build a positive *Customer-Based Brand Equity* in the eyes of the *customers*, business owners can improve *customer* positive responses towards price, distribution, advertisement, and *brand* promotional activities (Keller, 1993). Therefore, it is crucial for *brand start-up*

stationery to be able to determine a suitable target market before marketing the product.

### **Gen Z and Social Media**

Young people in Indonesia nowadays really love stationery products as it is shown by the increasing number of *influencers* in social media doing personal branding as the experts of *journaling*, *hand-lettering*, *scrapbooking*, and so on (Fromm & Read, 2013). This group of youngsters is called Gen Z. In general, they are those who were born in the year 1996-2010.

Gen Z were born in the digital era, so, surely, they are shaped by technology. A study by Alvara Indonesia Gen Z and Millennial Report 2020 indicated that the majority of Gen Z use social media for 4-6 hours per day (Ali et al., 2020). There is no day without social media and the internet. Lamberton & Stephen (2016) said that the increasing use of social media facilitates communication not only between business and customer, but also interactions between *customers* (Reinartz et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be said that social media is the right tool for stationery business to build *brand awareness*.

A survey to 1701 respondents by Jakpat in the first semester of 2020 found that Instagram gained the first rank (79%) as the most used social media by Gen Z. The most interesting thing from Instagram is that 52% of the users admitted that they use Instagram as a media to do activities related to *brand engagement* and 38% of the respondents used it as a media to search for *brand* or specific products (Dea, 2020).

### **Consumer Mega Shift post-Covid-19 Pandemic**

As we know in the year 2020, the world has been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic which has urged the governments to enforce *lockdown* confining citizens to stay at home most of their time. Based on the data by Consumer Behavior New Normal (e-book), 79% of the respondents spent the majority of their time at home.

This surely has intensified the use of the internet significantly (Yuswohady et al., 2020).

In addition, they have invested in small pleasures which can increase their quality of life and are meaningful to them. This, in fact, has changed the way a *brand* communicates their marketing strategies. A brand advertisement must be uplifting to individual users. As the use of easily understood and humorous video content is more preferable, a brand could utilize simple ways to share happiness (Jusuf, 2020).

The change of consumer behavior after the Covid-19 pandemic has urged *brand start-up stationery* to change the way they communicate with the *customer*. However, this phenomenon should not let *brands* forget its fundamental reason to exist. Changing the way to communicate with the target market does not mean changing the *value* intended to communicate.

### **Market Approach**

*Go-to-market* is a term often used to refer to all matters related to business needs to broadcast their product in the market. Gen Z has a generally lower *attention span* compared to the previous generations, therefore, stationery business should be able to design a *go-to-market plan* which can bring a pleasant *brand experience* since the first time *customers* encounter the business or products up to they buy and use them (Bhargava & Herman, 2020; Zollo et al., 2020).

A pleasant brand experience intends to increase *customer retention*. This is crucial as keeping the existing *customers* is easier than reaching for new *customers*. It is necessary to remember that meaningful interactions between *brand* and *customers* personally could increase *brand loyalty*.

### **Social Media as a Part of Marketing Strategy**

Using social media as a promotional tool for a *start-up stationery* business in its initial state is ideal. According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2011), social media is considered to be the strongest media for viral marketing campaigns as well as

product *launching* (Yadav et al., 2015). Stationery products which have just been released are not yet perfect. Therefore, customer's feedback on the products is crucial to improve the business. This is in line with Parise dan Guinan (2008) stating that *customers* are keen to be involved in the product development (Constantinides, 2014).

*Community and Belonging* innovation has occurred when *customers* are involved in a *brand* development process (Keeley et al., 2013). If this happens continuously and intensively in social media, a *sense of community* in which customers have experienced a close and intimate relationship or an affiliation with the *brand*, will occur (Keller, 2001).

### **Social Media is Social**

Nowadays, Gen Z has no longer trusted the so-called *Push Marketing*. *Push Marketing* is usually done by disrupting *customer* potential which is often carried out through buying *ads*. *Pull Marketing*, however, tries to attract customers through *brand communication* by providing *value* which usually is conveyed through social media content (Quesenberry, 2019).

The most common error committed by *start-up* businesses is when they implement *push marketing* using social media instead of communicating (Fromm & Read, 2013). Meanwhile, as the name suggests, "*social media is social*". It is important to remember that a brand which can develop *brand awareness* in social media is a brand which is humane instead of robotic (Swartz, 2020).

### **Ways to Make Your Voice Heard**

A *brand* should possess a strong *social presence* in social media because the higher the social presence, the bigger the social influence that it has towards the customer (Quesenberry, 2019). To obtain *social presence*, a brand should realize what the needs and the benefits the *customers* want and should also solve their problems by giving values through social media (Miller, 2017; Zollo et al., 2020).

When implementing *brand communication* through social media, a *brand* should clarify the message they intend to deliver because if the message is unclear, it is for sure prospective customers will not listen. There are three ways to achieve the above goal, namely: *simple, relevant, and repeatable* (Miller, 2017). Gen Z has a lower *attention span* when compared to the previous generations, therefore, a short, condensed, clear and useful message to customers will attract their attention.

### **Word of Mouth**

“*Trusting relationship*” is the most important thing for customers and determines *customer loyalty*, more than low price, product quality and even innovation (Moorman & McCarthy, 2021; Yadav et al., 2015). In fact, customers will put more trust on what other customers say, rather than on what a business mentions on social media.

A positive *Customer-based Brand Equity* created through other customer's reviews, experience, functionality, reputation and word of mouth recommendation (*Word of Mouth*) (Quesenberry, 2019; Stephen, 2016). According to Leeflang et al. (2014), *customers* could actively participate in creating *brand value* by promoting the brand through social media content *review* (Reinartz et al., 2019).

To increase *brand* credibility, business owners could use services from a reliable *social media influencer* who often delivers honest reviews. Brand should be used prior to being reviewed. Research data from Digital Business Journals indicated that a social media influencer could bring positive effects to brand credibility (Nafees et al., 2021).

### **CONCLUSION**

Social media is the most appropriate tool used by stationery business to reach target market who are Gen Z since it has been the characteristics of Gen Z to be attached to the Internet and social media

To reach Gen Z through social media, *stationery* business should avoid *Push Marketing* strategies and focus more on *Pull Marketing* strategies in which business

tries to pull customers through *brand communication* by providing *value* such as messages normally delivered through social media content.

The delivered messages should be *simple, relevant, and repeatable* so as to be heard by Gen Z who are mostly with short attention span. *Word of Mouth* which is the key success of the stationery business could also reach Gen Z. When customers of the stationery business possess a strong *sense of community*, it will be certain that they will voluntarily promote the products which lead to *word of mouth*. *Word of mouth* is the highest point in which a brand could be considered to have a high credibility and has successfully reached gen Z target market.

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