Social Media and Product Branding for MSMEs Actors

by Ido Prijana Hadi

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Abstract.
Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia thrive and provide hope for small businesses. Starting from the culinary business, fashion, education, automotive, agribusiness, tour & travel, creative products, internet technology, cosmetics/beauty, event-organizer, cleaning services, children's needs, etc. MSMEs are business activities carried out by individuals or privately owned business entities. The focus of MSME business ordinarily on one line of business. Moreover, it is easy to start compared to large-scale businesses. This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods. This study seeks to reveal the experiences of MSME actors when interpreting the various uses of social media in supporting their business. The subjects of this study amounted to 14 MSME actors with various ages. Moreover, various types of businesses. Data collection techniques by conducting in-depth interviews, namely to reveal the natural story of each individual's life experience. The results showed that the use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Tik-Tok Whatsapp and Line provided space for interaction and communication between sellers and consumers. Social media helps the branding process in attracting the attention of users to expand new followers as potential customers. The implication of this study is to maintain politeness in communicating with the language without being abbreviated. Moreover, caring for consumers.
Keywords: Social Media, Branding, Interaction, MSMEs

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia from March 2020 until this research was conducted has pushed the Indonesian economy into a recession. The impact of the pandemic is entering a multidimensional recession on all sectors of community activity. The business sector directly affected is *Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises* (MSMEs). In 2020, there were 37,000 MSME actors who reported to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs feeling the impact of the corona virus, or Covid-19, on their businesses. As many as 56 percent of MSMEs reported that there was a decline in sales, 22 percent admitted to having capital difficulties, 15 percent reported hampered distribution. Moreover, 4 percent reported difficulties in raw materials (Kompas.com, 2020)

Kamdani (2022) emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated a number of challenges faced by MSMEs. The real difficulty faced by MSME actors apart from capital and finance is the lack of knowledge about how to expand their market penetration in order to be able to compete in the global market. Nevertheless, during this pandemic period, this sector is quite resilient, flexible in dealing with uncertain turbulences, and is able to survive in the economy of Indonesian citizens.

MSMEs in the pillars of the Indonesian economy play a crucial role. According to the World Bank, MSMEs create 50 percent of jobs globally. MSMEs also contribute about 40 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of developing countries. Nevertheless, seven out of 10 jobs are absorbed by MSMEs. The contribution of MSMEs

in absorbing labor is up to 97 percent of the absorption capacity of the business world in 2020 (Kamdani, 2022). Moreover, based on data from the Surabaya Cooperative and Micro Business Office, the number of MSMEs in Surabaya increased by 40 thousand during 2020 to 2021. The total number of MSMEs throughout East Java reached 9.7 million (Meilisa, 2021).

East Java Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa (Parawansa, 2021)said that the movement of MSMEs using digital platforms was getting higher. Conversely, competency support is still quite low. Consequently, training in the ability to build communication with customers is needed, as well as expanding the sales network so that every business actor can survive to develop his business (detik.com). Moreover, Minister of Law and Human Rights Yasonna H. Laoly (Laoly, 2022) acknowledged that the creative economy of Indonesian MSME actors is important in supporting stable, strong and inclusive national economic growth.

The Indonesian government believes that MSMEs are able to grow again faster than large companies. An important aspect for SMEs is how to build successful brands, thereby helping them to maintain relationships with consumers, create long-term sustainable competitive advantages. Moreover, protect businesses from market turbulence and uncertainty.

Building a brand for an MSME product is a fast-paced challenge in the midst of digital transformation and a dynamic and disruptive world economic situation. Moreover, MSMEs have faced various difficulties, such as lack of access to finance as business capital. Until the lack of knowledge on how to expand market penetration in order to be able to compete in the global market (Kamdani, 2022). Expanding market penetration is very decisive in the success of digital entrepreneurship for MSMEs. Adequate infrastructure facilities, especially in communication network connectivity, literacy and digital adaptability are very important in order to be able to penetrate the market.

One of the processes of market penetration in the digital media era is utilizing social media. Social media is all around us. For many people, social media is the first thing to see when they wake up. Moreover, the last thing to do before went to bed. Social media has been integrated into private and public life. Social media entertains, informs, connects (and sometimes disconnects) us.

Data Reportal research results show that the number of social media users in Indonesia reached 191.4 million in January 2022. This figure increased by 21 million or 12.6 percent from 2021. This figure is equivalent to 68.9 percent of the total population in Indonesia. For comparison, the population in Indonesia now reaches 277.7 million as of January 2022 (Kemp, 2022). This means that almost 70% of Indonesia's population are active users of social media. Moreover, social media branding activities are very potential when associated with local market trends and international.

Social media is more than just social. Social media is a necessity that is all around us. Its users gain social experiences during their activities for various purposes and benefits. Moreover, understanding social media also means understanding its users in various contexts. It's also important to remember that social media can reach small, authentic communities. So that the planned use of social media opens up opportunities for anyone to reach the market. Creativity remains the key in optimizing social media, especially for business brand owners.

Building a customer community around a product is the dream of every brand holder. Moreover, successful brands are built over time through many resources. Social media is one of the resources to get followers as potential customers. However, it does

not automatically become a truly engaged and active consumer or community. Brand building partnering with content creators will connect with new audiences, to gain people's trust and recognition. Given, marketing effectiveness is not just about getting consumers to buy something, but more about building a relationship between consumers and brands (Stephen, 2020)

Manufacturing processes can be duplicated in creative ways. Conversely, in the digital era it is difficult to predict consumer attitudes because they do not necessarily adhere to certain brands. Therefore, product virtual presence helps product positioning and branding towards long-term sustainable competitive advantage. At the same time maintaining consumer perception in building a consistent brand so that customers will more easily recognize it. Social media has the potential to have the power to build customer-brand relationships in order to survive in today's marketing competition (M, 2018); Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Chen et al., 2016).

The interactive nature of social media not only allows sellers to share and exchange information with their customers, but also allows customers to share and exchange information with each other (Sashi, 2012). Moreover, social media is able to penetrate quickly into society. Companies use social media as part of their marketing and brand building activities (Gallaugher, J., & Ransbotham, 2010), although only a small number of companies feel comfortable. in a new environment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Understanding the use of social media for product branding cannot be separated from users as MSME actors. The relationship between social media and users cannot be separated from it. Theoretical ideas serve as a guide for researchers to understand and explain. Theories represent the various ways in which scientists perceive their environment more than they can perceive reality. A theory offers one way to capture the "truth" of a phenomenon, but it is not the only way to view the phenomenon (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Social terms in the concept of social media are basic terms that represent the way humans communicate. That is the way people relate to each other that requires mutual consent. Social media studies are very diverse in defining the notion of social media. The implication can also lead to religious connotations of a concept. Moreover, this makes it increasingly difficult to create an understanding that can be operated as a guide in research and theory development.

Communication experts state that the various definitions of social media that exist today are wide-ranging. Moreover, shows the complexity, the point of attention, and the ability to apply outside the discipline of knowledge. Several definitions of social media have been formulated by various interdisciplinary parties. Mayfield (2008) explains that social media can be understood as a group of new types of online media, which have the characteristics of participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. Brogan (2010)defines social media as "social media is a new set of communication and collaboration tools that enable many types of interactions that were previously not available to the common person". Moreover, Carr & Hayes, (2015) define, "social media are internet-based, disentrained, and persistent channels of mass-personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content". This understanding refers to (1) digital technology that emphasizes user-generated content or interaction (2) media characteristics, and (3) social networks such as facebook, twitter, instagram, and others as examples of interaction models.

Social media relies on Web-based technology to turn discrete user contributions, usually rather brief, such as status updates or comments into a stream of activity.

Therefore, studying social media we must think about how social tools facilitate the production and dissemination of information, and how people discuss and consume information (Cann, A., Dimitriou, K. & Hooley, 2011). Therefore, the social concept expresses the reason why users are connected on this platform – what is the purpose, is it sharing experiences, or working together. Moreover, social media as another space where humans interact is a modernization marked by the speed of information flow, globalization and the digital economy.

Social media is online content created using publishing technology that is easily accessible and user friendly. People who use social media are familiar with technology to access, search and share information (Hadi, 2019). Dozens of social media channels are already popular in the community, for example Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn. Moreover, in the era of digital application media, Whatsapp and Line, it is very easy for people to get information for smartphone users. The term smartphone as emphasized by Choudrie et al., (2014) is, "as a mobile device that allows users to make telephone calls, sends and receives emails, downloads files, provides an internet connection and uses applications".

Smartphone is a client platform that has applications for networking, which functions as an interactive communication medium among users. Literature studies often refer to Whatsapp and Line as messaging apps, rather than complete social media platforms. The Whatsapp application is able to provide added value for users in the speed of marketing communications, like web-based social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Linkedin, Tumblr, Vimeo, Google+, Periscope, Kaskus, and so on.

Social media has been widely used for branding. The term brand can refer to a symbol, logo, sign or combination that identifies the product or service of one seller or group of sellers and differentiates the product from competitors' products (DAM, 2020; Budiman, 2021; Mudgal, Ritu; Singh, 2020). Moreover, a brand is known by its customers for its quality products, reasonable prices, and satisfactory service. Social media is able to provide brand awareness at an early stage, where consumers are getting to know a product and its services. Good branding helps in creating brand image and goodwill in the market. Meanwhile, brand image has played an important role in the decision process of purchasing activities by consumers (DAM, 2020).

Generally, a higher brand image indicates product quality exceeds a certain level of expectation. Moreover, a lower brand image or no brand that can be shown, consumers will not believe in the product (Hsieh et al., 2018). For business people, brand image and reputation are the most common issues in sales because they affect brand loyalty. Loyalty to a brand can be interpreted as a customer's intention to buy products or use the services of the same brand later (Tarkiainen et al., 2016; Šerić et al., 2015; Loureiro, 2015; Budiman, 2021).

The presence of social media changes the way people view a product, both in small companies and large scale companies. Social media is an important tool that is phenomenal in today's digital area, which is a must-have for every novice entrepreneur who is better known as a startup. The positive benefits of social media are many, one of which is for branding activities. Davis (2015) asserts that social media enables customers' brand knowledge to be enhanced, and social media provides opportunities to turn brand experiences into relationships through personalized communication and co-creation. If there is an accumulation of positive comments from users of a particular brand, in addition to increasing brand awareness and equity, it is also likely to increase sales.

Based on Law no. 20 of 2008 concerning Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

are divided into three groups. Micro-enterprises are individual-owned businesses or individual-owned business entities. The criteria for micro-enterprises are to have a maximum net worth of 50 million rupiah, excluding land and buildings. Another criterion is that annual sales do not exceed 300 million rupiah. Small business is a standalone business owned by an individual or a business entity. This business is not a subsidiary or branch company of a medium or large business. The net worth of small business actors is between 50 million rupiah and 500 million rupiah. This figure does not include land and buildings for business premises. Sales revenue is between 300 million rupiah to 2.5 billion rupiah per year. Moreover, medium-sized enterprises are productive economic enterprises that standalone. This business is owned by an individual or a business entity, merely is not a subsidiary of a large company or branch of a large company. The total net worth of medium-sized business actors is between 500 million rupiah to 10 billion rupiah. This figure does not include land and business buildings. Has annual sales of more than 2.5 billion rupiah to 50 billion rupiah.

This study uses a phenomenological approach in which phenomenology is a branch of philosophy, where Edmund Husserl (1905) published a philosophical phenomenology (Owen, 2001), which formerly had implications for the thought of the Social Sciences and Humanism, including Communication (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Alfred Schutz (Schutz, 1967)formerly developed it as a theory, in addition to a extra operational approach, especially for research in the Social Sciences, including communication research (Miller, 1977). Schutz's thought (1899-1959) became known as the phenomenology of the social world (Schutz, 1967).

Schutz's (1967) efforts in developing this theory are a continuation of Husserl's (1905) efforts, namely to examine the ways in which members of society structure and reshape the nature of everyday life. Schutz emphasized that awareness and interaction are mutually exclusive. Each individual interacts with the world with a 'stock of knowledge' which consists of 'general' constructs and categories which are basically social. These images, theories, ideas, values and attitudes are applied to various aspects of experience so that they are meaningful. The provision of knowledge is the only source that allows each individual to interpret experience, understand the intentions and motivations of other individuals, gain intersubjective understanding, and ultimately seek action. (Denzin, Norman K & Lincoln, 2009).

Schutz (1967) puts the concept of "intersubjectivity" in his theory, which is more specific in how the everyday world of humans is formed through the awareness of intersubjectivity. This kind of awareness is a series of understandings that a person maintains over time in his interactions with other people. The process of understanding and giving meaning to the experience is done through behavioral reflection.

Each interpretive focus is inductive because it requires verstehen (Outhwaite, 1975) namely through the actors' efforts to create a meaningful subjective world, in the context of everyday 'natural'. Consequently, they are able to understand other people based on the behavior, language, definitions, attitudes, and feelings of the people being studied (Denzin, 1971). Moreover, phenomenology seeks to find out how we can interpret our social actions and other people's as meaningful and to reconstruct the derivative meaning of meaningful actions in the intersubjective communication of individuals in the world of social life. Understanding the meaning of social action is obtained by playing and re-selecting the recordings of social action experiences that accumulate in humans as a stock of knowledge (Schutz, 1967). Then we can select elements of experience that allow us to see the meaning of our actions. (Campbell, Tom; Hardiman, 1994).

This phenomenological analysis seeks to get an idea of how it feels to be someone else. Moreover, to understand what we see, hear, and function in one's daily life. The researcher tries to enter into the world of interpretation of the person who is the subject of the research. Researchers engage cognitively with the people being observed and explain scientifically this process (Kuswarno, 2009). Related to this phenomenological study, researchers obtain phenomena in the field.

The phenomenon that the researcher found was that some business actors (MSMEs) have not seen the importance of introducing their products to consumers since the start of the business. They have not realized the importance of introducing the product to the public. The reason is that they think their business scale is still small. So, they don't feel the importance of branding the product. Moreover, when the scale of their business increases or advances in class, the product or brand they are already using turns out to be someone else's. In fact, they have built a brand or product from scratch, so they have to replace it and reintroduce the product brand to consumers. Ideally, MSME actors register their product brands since starting a business from scratch, while increasing sales turnover.

Based on this phenomenon, an understanding of branding for MSMEs is extremely significant. MSME actors often judge that if they already have a logo or label, they already have a brand. This effort is not wrong, nonetheless not optimal. Given that branding is the identity or face of the brand that they want to show to the public. Moreover, branding is a way to create a positive perception concerning the products, companies, and services they provide. In the completion, if MSME business players understand completely, they will be able to accelerate the process of economic recovery in the difficult situation of the Covid-19 pandemic by creating innovative business sources.

This study refers to the results of previous studies that are relevant to this topic. Comparable the results of Trulline (2021) research entitled *Marketing of MSME Products through Social Media and e-Commerce*. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on the culinary field. The results of her research show that MSME actors have started using social media such as Instagram and e-commerce such as *GoFood* and *GrabFood* to market their products. Moreover, some MSME actors have mastered various features on social media such as Instagram which are intended for business.

Sulaksono (2020) research entitled *The Role of Digital Marketing for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Tales Village, Kediri Regency*. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive observational type of research. The results of the study show that several business actors actively use social media as their promotional tool. They have not separated the online shop account with their personal account. Some people use social media occasionally, the rest never use social media for marketing due to lack of technology skills. Nevertheless, all participants showed great interest in using social media as a marketing tool.

Another study from Anugerah & Nuraini (2021) entitled *The Role of MSMEs in Overcoming Poverty in East Java Province*. This study aims to determine the effect of the number of MSMEs and MSME workers on poverty in East Java during the 2017-2018 period. The quantitative research approach uses data regression analysis techniques. The independent variables used are the number of MSMEs and MSME workers in East Java. The dependent variable is the amount of poverty in East Java. The results showed that the number of MSMEs and MSME workers had a significant positive effect on poverty in East Java.

Subsequent research from Fischer & Reuber (2011) entitled *Social interaction via new social media: (How) can interactions on Twitter affect effectual thinking and behavior?* This study uses an inductive theory-building methodology aimed at developing a proposition about how the effectuating process is affected when entrepreneurs adopt Twitter. Twitter is a micro blogging platform that can facilitate a marked increase in interaction. The findings of this study were Twitter-based interactions can trigger effective cognition, but high-level interactions through this medium can cause "effectual churn".

This study shows different aspects from previous research, where Trulline (2021) research focuses on SMEs in the culinary field by only using Instagram. Then, the research of Sulaksono (2020) focuses on the use of social media but has not been clearly specified. Moreover, research by Anugerah & Nuraini (2021) with a quantitative approach focuses more on the influence of the number of MSMEs and labor on poverty in East Java. Research by Fischer & Reuber (2011) focuses on the effectuation process in entrepreneurs who adopt Twitter. This is the novelty in this research, which is trying to reveal the daily experiences of MSME actors in using various social media for product branding.

Based on this background, this research focuses on how the experience of MSME actors using various social media for branding their products? The benefits of the results of this study are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the study of phenomenology which emphasizes awareness, perception, meaning, and knowledge. The implication is in the ethics of social media for MSME actors when they market their products. Moreover, they have the opportunity to penetrate national and international markets.

Methods

The paradigm of this research was interpretive with a qualitative approach. Moreover, using phenomenological methods. This study seeks to explored the experience or awareness of something. That something is an object of consciousness that has been stimulated by the perception of a "real" object or through the act of remembering or inventing (Smith, Jonathan A; Flowers, Paul & Larkin, 2009). Max Weber (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) calls it verstehen. Research subjects provide information to researchers as it happens in their own lives, which is full of meaning (meaningful social action). Not the view according to the researcher as an outsider, nonetheless according to the meaning of the informant himself (emic) as the actor or the subject of the research.

Research design by setting research subjects, data collection methods and data analysis methods. The research subjects are MSME actors who haTayve various products, selected by purposing sampling. Another criterion is that MSME actors have used social media in their business communication and are willing to be research subjects. The research subjects are domiciled in Yogyakarta, Semarang, Magelang, Sidoarjo and Surabaya. The total subjects of this study amounted to 14 people as MSME actors. Primary data was obtained from in-depth interviews with MSME actors, including general characteristic's data, data on the use of social media, the purpose of using social media, benefits and obstacles faced. Researchers complement the research data with data from observations of MSME actors and the social media they use in their business ventures. To test the validity of the data using the data triangulation method, the results of in-depth interviews and observations of MSME actors.

Results

The qualitative approach with the phenomenological method was a view that focuses on human subjective experiences. The results of the study reveal the subject's experience in interpreting social media as MSME branding actors, as follows.

The use of social media provides space for interaction and communication between actors and consumers.

Social media has become very popular with the wider community, including research subjects as users. The 14 MSME actors who were interviewed have used social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Tik-Tok, including social media applications Whatsapp and Line. On average, they have known as social media users since 2015 until this research was conducted until May 2022. Moreover, the time span they used to consume social media starts from less than one hour to 12 hours per day. While the types of their MSME businesses vary, such as culinary kambuchea tea (Herbal), knitted handicrafts, fashion jersey, clothing line, birthday cakes, pie businesses, wet cakes, shoe washing services, Japanese toy cards (Hype and Play), rice bowl, traditional drink.

One of the research subjects, Yovani Prayogi (19 years old) said that he uses social media to interact with consumers, promote products, and see what is trending in the market. According to him, from the start, he used Instagram social media to help MSME businesses (@bumbuin.aja) with the tag line Recognize Indonesian Basic Cuisine and Seasonings. His business offers several kitchen spices such as shallots and garlic. The product has been peeled and cut into small pieces so that it is easy to cook. This is a innovation, which of course can help consumers not to bother spending time to peel it.

Social media that has been used by MSME actors provides benefits and makes it easier to communicate. The actors stated that their business can reach different audiences. Moreover make it easier to connect with customers. One of the confessions of Ahmad Syaiffudin (26 years old), an MSME player with the Jersey Papo Apparel product in Yogyakarta. He said, to post product photos using Instagram so that people can see the jersey product catalog, various types of design examples and inspiration. ”*We also provide design requests according to the wishes of the buyer. And also provide some photos of customer testimonials about our products, ranging from materials, quality, and comfort. We provide Whatsapp to order products, or you can directly go through our Instagram*”.

As an MSME actor, he provided a link on Instagram at @jersey.papo. Therefore, buyers can directly click the link in their Instagram bio to ask questions before placing an order. Through Whatsapp, buyers can directly ask questions or buy the expected product. The seller will immediately respond to the buyer's order according to the queue or chat that entered first. The Instagram account already has enough followers around 3,272. He has been dedicated to delivering his commitment to doing business through Instagram, which has yielded satisfactory results. Instagram is a very practical social media channel for promotion by viewing products and product catalogs.

Furthermore, the use of social media for MSME actors to interact with potential buyers or consumers. Social media as a means of communicating with buyers makes it very easy for potential buyers without having to come to an offline store. They carry out activities such as advertising, chatting, building relationships, discussing, and seeing trends for business opportunities. The ads they often use are through the Instagram feeds and stories platform. In publishing on Instagram feeds, the template design of each post

must be in accordance with the specified concept so that the arrangement of the feeds looks neat, beautiful and pleasing to the eye. Promotional posters are also included in advertising activities which are ordinarily published through Instagram stories. The process of responding to messages from customers through chat on social media. Admins from MSMEs are always on standby on Whatsapp or on Instagram to monitor and answer messages from buyers who still want to ask something related to the product.

Building relationships with the public is one of the reasons for using social media as a platform for doing business. The implication is that MSME products are increasingly recognized by buyers by word of mouth. Social media applications on smartphones, such as Line and Whatsapp help MSME actors to discuss with partners to discuss marketing strategies and sales evaluation so far. Perpetrators use social media to see ongoing trends in the fashion industry, particularly jersey. The latest information generates ideas for business opportunities. The opportunity is a motivation to try new things.

Another research subject, Rendy Mandala (26 years old) who runs a clothing line business in Surabaya, said that he uses social media because he does not yet have a physical store. Therefore, from social media he can get to know many people, especially people from outside the city. He said, "we use social media for branding purposes and particularly for selling, since our clothing line does not have an offline store, conversely, an online shop". Social media to keep up with the latest model developments that are constantly changing with the times. The most important thing is to help find the latest design ideas and help to brand for clothing line sales.

Based on the findings in the field, the experience of MSME actors in using social media for product branding is described in the communication model flow as shown in Figure 1 below:
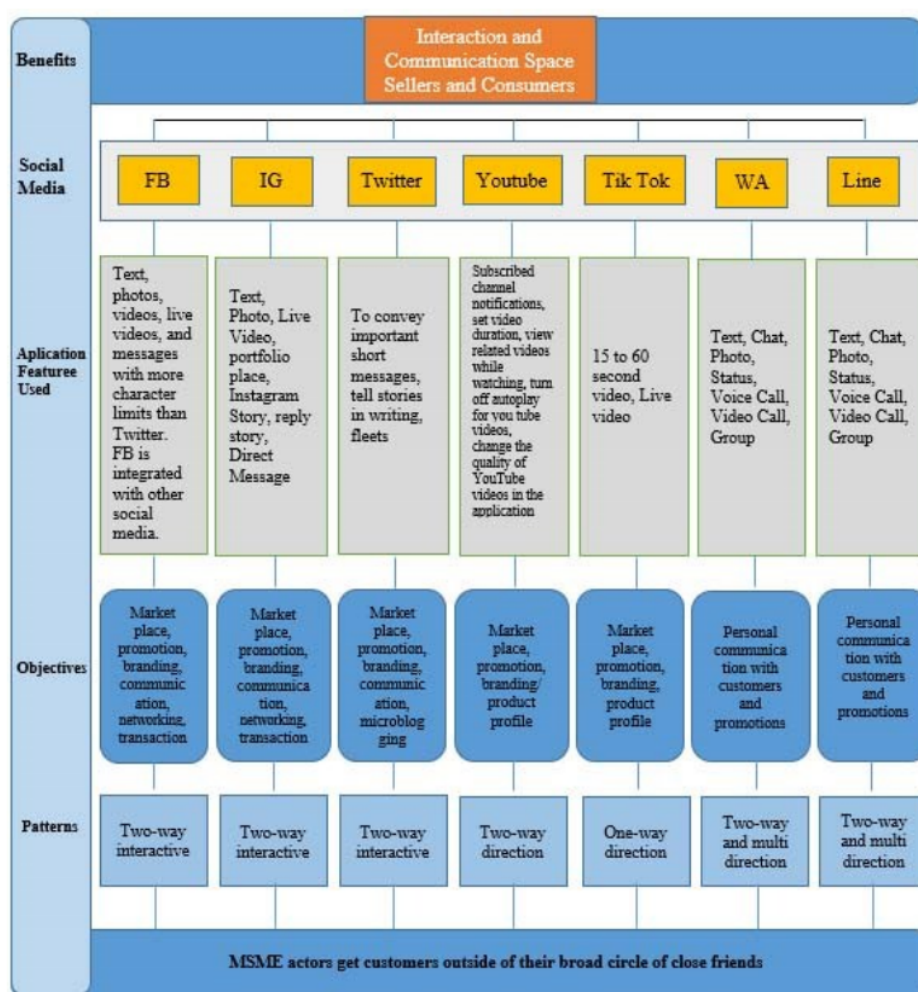
Fig.1. Communication Patterns of MSME Actors in Using Social Media for Branding.

Based on Fig.1, the efforts of MSME actors in building social media channels for business start by maximizing the use of features on each social media. For example, how to manage customer conversations at scale with various features in social media platforms. MSMEs did not only sell products but the social media they manage contain real-world insights and strategies, thus brands can compete globally.

Therefore, MSME actors pay attention to the state of customer engagement, what drives the demand for instant messaging, how to use social media messaging cases according to their respective features for business. Learn how global brands are using social media to increase customer engagement. WhatsApp benefits for customer communication to be at the forefront of the instant messaging revolution for their business.

Whatsapp and Line as social media applications refer to the application of an Android-based system used by users for the benefit of individual or social interaction.

WhatsApp is also an interactive web 2.0 application that can be accessed online (https://web.whatsapp.com/). Whatsapp facilitates social interaction via text, voice, video or groups. However, the social interaction is only limited to the recipient who is sent to a person or group, as intended by the sender. The practice of multi directional messaging usually occurs in groups according to the context of people's interests.

Social Media Attracts Users Attention To Expand New Followers as Potential Customers.

Social media has an important role in the business of MSMEs. Social media is the key to their business success. Agnes Eugenia (19 years old) admits that as an MSME actor in pastry food in Surabaya, she said that, "social media benefits are able to reach people easily. I hope to attract more customers. While the drawback of social media is that many other businesses use it, so the competition is getting tougher." Moreover, Davyen Farolson (20 years old), a Japanese children's toy card business (hype and play) in Surabaya, said that, "Facebook has been very useful for me, because I have been selling online and do not have a physical store. Facebook provides an opportunity to get to know many people. For example, we can get acquainted with long distance people from various cities in Indonesia."

During the MSME business, various buyers come from outside the city, such as from Jakarta, Sulawesi, Kalimantan. He posts his products on the Tokopedia application. He has also created a system. Consequently, people can search on their own without his help. According to Farolson, the benefits of social media are to attract customers to buy their products. Social media for him is a market place that is needed by entrepreneurs to expand their business. Social media can increase sales and attract new customers. The downside of social media is that there are increasingly competitors, every person can do the same business as anyone else. According to him, it must be smart to post and talk so that customers buy.

Kelly Yumico (18 years) is a beginner in Pie business in Semarang. Moreover, has been in business for 13 months using Instagram and Tik Tok. He said that the benefits of social media to reach customers according to the target market. Social media is used to do promotions for free, find customers with a wide reach. He also chats with customers. The initial difficulty is that it is difficult to find customers as the product does not have a name or is not known to people. The solution, according to her, is to maximize the Tik Tok platform for creating content, paid to promote influencers.

Moreover, Marcellino Ivan (19 years old) who runs a shoe washing service business in Surabaya said, "*Being a member of a group is very beneficial in participating in sharing between groups. Thus, that it can help when dealing with other customers*." On social media, users will have more confidence in businesses that have lots of testimonials and followers. This means that consumers already believe in the quality of the product and are well-known to many people.

The target market for MSME actors is people who use social media. Therefore, they interact with customers in order to know the wishes and expectations of customers. The difficulty they often face is consistency in providing good content for their social media observers. Consequently, branding is not just a matter of branding or a beneficial visualization of a product. Branding goes deeper than that. "*Branding is related to the values you want to convey, such as the beginning of a product being formed, to the image you want to achieve*".

Social media provides a much needed marketplace for entrepreneurs who want to expand their business or business to increase sales by attracting new customers. Brand functions as a reminder and differentiator. Brand as part of building trust, and brand to support sales. Meanwhile, social media is a new marketing tool (Berinato, 2010).

Discussion

MSMEs are small-scale businesses. Nevertheless, despite their small scale, it turns out that MSMEs are the largest contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Indonesia. Reporting from ekon.go.id, with a total of 64.2 million, MSMEs contributed to 61% of Indonesia's total GDP. Furthermore, MSMEs absorb 97% of the total workforce and collect 60.4% of the total investment (Kementrian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian, 2021; Kompas.com, 2022). Therefore, it can be said that MSMEs are the most important pillars in the Indonesian economy. The Indonesian government is well aware of this great potential. Nonetheless, unfortunately, 98.68% of the more than 64 million MSMEs are micro-enterprises. Most of them still find it difficult to compete against several challenges, one of which is marketing in the digital era.

The significant thing from the experience of micro-entrepreneurs is the difficulty in branding or imaging the products or services they produce. Moreover, in the digital era, MSME actors should know, be closer, and be familiar with branding. They did not only concentrate on product quality but forget about branding. Nonetheless, the benefits of branding are extraordinary in selling a product. A good brand value can help MSME products enter modern retail, to compete in the e-commerce and social commerce sectors. Professionally managed products will be very powerful to help increase sales, increase business volume, and so on.

Social media has a unique character in marketing. Social media is a channel for sharing ideas and information openly to foster a sense of togetherness. Social media brings people together for interaction and conversation. Moreover, community members on social media can influence each other during the process of interaction and conversation. It was also emphasized that social media facilitates online communities where consumers can share experiences and opinions with a growing audience in electronic form of word of mouth (Chen et al., 2016; Thackeray et al., 2008; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

The advantages of MSME businesses are that they are quick to innovate, focus on one line of business, and easy to start a business. Moreover, the lack of MSMEs based on the experience of the actors focused on a limited operational budget, minimal expert staff, and low product capacity. Consequently, the efforts of branding MSME actors through an interactive two-way communication pattern are able to develop and improve relationships with customers (Fig. 1). Social media not only intensifies the relationship between business actors to customers and customers to business actors, but also increases the ability of business actors to interact in business-customer dialogue, strengthening their communication. Social media fundamentally changes the nature of interaction in terms of ease of contact, volume and speed (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Gallaugher, J., & Ransbotham, 2010).

Although there is no definite typology of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), Fischer & Reuber (2011) generally classifies social media as social networking (e.g. Facebook), social bookmarking (e.g. Digg), video sharing (e.g. YouTube), image sharing (e.g. Flickr), professional networks (e.g. LinkedIn), user forums, weblogs (or blogs), and micro blogging (e.g. Twitter) (Chen, Chen, Xu, 2016). Therefore, it is better to optimize

social media messages for each stage of the business-customer journey interactively.

Brand is an intangible asset that determines the sustainability of a business. It's not even impossible, a micro business can level up to a small business, and a medium business if it has a mature brand. MSME actors need to implement a simple, easy, powerful branding strategy in the digital era. The result of branding is to increase brand awareness to form brand loyalty. Brand is an asset that will bear fruit in the future. When the brand is mature, a business can be stronger and able to compete. Notwithstanding, many similar competitors have sprung up. Some efforts that can be made for branding are choosing brands that are easy to remember and pronounce. The important thing is to run promotions on various social media channels.

The right messaging platform doesn't just address customer convenience expectations. But seeks to improve the entire customer journey — extending brand awareness into customer engagement channels, enabling easier and more natural customer communication, meeting evolving consumer expectations around timely account and order notifications, and providing valuable support and other re-engagement opportunities after purchase. This more modern approach to messaging has the potential to create more sales opportunities and drive increased customer satisfaction and retention while increasing operational efficiency for your organization. The most important implication of this study is to maintain politeness in communicating without abbreviating messages and paying attention to customers.

Consumers in the digital era are very updated about quality, quantity, price, goods, colors, variations, and so on. Business actors can maximize the power of social media in explaining products. Once consumers are aware of the brand, consumers begin to recognize the name of the store only by symbols or tag lines. Brand-related communications have become relevant and engaging interactive conversations. Communication is now engagement which is a conversation among brand stakeholders (Davis, 2015)). Remember consumers are stakeholders. Stakeholders are in the driving seat of brand value. Consequently, instead of ignoring the importance of communication, let's start to understand the importance of the power of social media in branding.

Social media from a marketing communications perspective provides opportunities for services to strengthen brands and connect to customers. Particularly, marketers encourage customers to engage with brand content to build brand awareness, loyal, and better relationships (Hajli et al., 2017). As emphasized by Swani & Milne (2017) one of the challenges for marketers is implementing the right social media content strategy to attract their audience to engage and popularize the content.

The popularity of brand content on social media affects brand relationships, brand awareness and loyalty, sales. Moreover brand purchases and can even give brands a distinct advantage over competitors (Swani & Milne, 2017). Social media has also changed the way consumers communicate and share information about brands so that consumers are now able to discuss, have opinions, and share their experiences with certain brands (Nielsen, 2011). As a local business, the thing that needs to be considered is not connecting with many people, but only connecting with the right people (Lestari & Siswantini, 2019).

Conclusion

Phenomenological studies on social media and product branding for MSME actors with various services or products conclude as follows. First, the use of social media provides a space for interaction and communication between actors and consumers.

MSME actors are generally young people who are creative in managing various products. They use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Tik-Tok, Whatsapp and Line to promote products and see market trends. Second, social media is very helpful to attract the attention of users to expand new followers as potential customers. This means that MSME actors use social media for free promotions, looking for customers with a wide reach. The implication of this study is in communicating business on social media while maintaining good manners without shortening the message, and always paying attention to the interests of customers.

Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organization related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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