
THE ROLE OF INFLUENCERS TO INCREASE SALES OF GOODS AND SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

With increasing levels of digital media consumption, organizational spending on online promotion continues to grow steadily and dynamically. However, in line with this growth in spending, it is clear that the effectiveness of promotional activities in the digital world has decreased. Today, organizations are looking for alternatives to influence consumers in an increasingly complex market. One of the key trends emerging is the adoption of the influencer marketing concept. The purpose of this article is to analyze the role, position and significance of digital influencers in the overall functioning of the online promotion system, as well as the impact of the influencer marketing concept on sustainable development. A literature analysis was conducted to understand the origins of this phenomenon, along with its scale, causes and impact on the functioning of the digital promotion system. After completing this stage, a questionnaire survey was conducted among a group of individual internet users to obtain primary data. The research findings show great potential in activities involving digital influencers. This potential is mainly related to the effective delivery of information regarding products or services, their impact on increasing brand awareness, and their influence on the sales of the company's products and services. This research confirms that digital marketing strategies involving influencers can achieve success, where influencers play a key role in persuading potential buyers through promotions on social media. The findings make a significant contribution to understanding the integration of influencers' roles in digital marketing strategies to achieve increased sales.

Keywords: Digital Influencer, Promotion, Brand

INTRODUCTION

The success and increase in sales is strongly linked to the strategic role of influencers in marketing. Product brands play a central role in business operations, which include recognition, distribution, and reaching target consumers (Wirapraja et al., 2018). Influencers, as a marketing tool that involves influential individuals (public figures) in society or certain target consumer segments, are a key element in building brand awareness (Wirapraja et al., 2018).

In the face of business fluctuations, especially in the era of social media, companies must rethink their marketing strategies. Younger generations tend to be more exposed to marketing campaigns and trust information from influencers (Kotler et al., 2017). The transformation of the market towards e-commerce and the changing view towards traditional marketing that is considered obsolete, shows that the influencer approach is becoming more effective (Opreana et al., 2015). Over the past few years, social media has become not only a "word-of-mouth" communication tool but also a social blending system that can spread product information quickly (Stephen & Toubia, 2010).

The ability of influencers to shape customer attitudes and behavior, including assisting in the purchase decision-making process, plays an important role in modern marketing (Adha et al., 2020). Influencers consistently introduce products or services to their followers. This includes reviews, testimonials, or usage demonstrations, which help the audience understand the product more deeply. Each influencer has unique characteristics that support them in promoting products. For example, Fadil Jaidi, a celebgram with 7.5 million followers on Instagram, not only has a large follower base but also attracts attention through his playful style of promoting, including cohesiveness with his father. With these characteristics, Fadil Jaidi is considered a mega influencer because she has a large number of followers and makes a big impact on the products she promotes.

Influencers with a large follower base and a huge impact on their audience are referred to as mega influencers (Made & Komang, 2019). The 2020 pandemic recorded a decline in business for PT Pos Indonesia, the leading expedition company in Indonesia (Aminah, 2020). PT Pos Indonesia's branch in Cianjur, West Java, which usually receives 50-60 customers daily, saw a drop to 20-30 customers due to the impact of the pandemic. Consumers' choice of expedition during the pandemic has also changed, with JNE Expedition ranking the highest, followed by JNT Expedition. PT Pos Indonesia ranked the lowest according to customer preference.

While business activities can be carried out online, entrepreneurs are now realizing that sales of goods and services beyond medical and basic needs have decreased. Local entrepreneurs have started to rely on the help of influencers to increase sales of their products, in addition to relying on the role of social media and readily available e-commerce platforms. People actively observe the actions of influencers or public figures, and according to their reviews, influencers have an important role in promoting and recommending products. Therefore, this study aims to assess how the presence of influential figures can affect product

sales. The term "influencer" has become familiar, referring to someone who is active on social media and has thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of loyal followers.

Corporate media influencers are used for three main reasons, as outlined by Sugiharto & Ramadhana (2018). First, to present; where information becomes the main focus to present things that the audience does not yet know. Second, persuade; where the influencer attempts to persuade the audience to accept a point of view or even adopt certain feelings and behaviors. Third, entertaining; where advertising content has two focuses, namely informative and persuasive to describe the end result of the advertising process, as well as entertainment to attract audience attention through visual elements and messages delivered.

The use of influencers can shape a product's brand image more effectively and economically than using artists or public figures who are usually endorsed by famous celebrities (Hariyanti & Wirapraja, 2018). Factors that are often taken into consideration in the selection of influencers involve the individual's ability, expertise, popularity, and reputation. Often, influencers and motivators are confused, even though they have different roles. Motivators, as motivational givers, present solutions and provide enlightenment for their audience (Nurfauziah, 2020).

Sales are the number of goods sold by a company within a certain period of time (Herlambang, 2014). To achieve optimal sales and meet targets, companies need to understand the sales process that involves identifying customers, classifying needs, and ensuring customer satisfaction through providing the right solutions and products (Yet, 2011). In today's digital era, marketing has embraced digital technology, especially by utilizing social media as a marketing platform. People's daily interactions on social media platforms are increasingly integrated, and social media advertising offers a number of advantages, including cost efficiency and extensive global reach.

Influencers, with their meaning as someone who has the power to influence others to make purchasing decisions based on their personal experiences and opinions, have become a key element in modern marketing. They emerge from a variety of backgrounds, including celebrities and celebgrams, and have a loyal base of followers across various social media platforms. Therefore, this research is focused on analyzing the role and strategy of using influencers in promoting products, particularly on the social media platform Instagram, which is one of the most active platforms in Indonesia. The presence of influencers on social media not only contributes positively to brand image, but also becomes an important element in marketing transformation towards the digital era.

Literature Review

Influencer

To increase marketing effectiveness, it is recommended to utilize social media through Influencer marketing (Tjiptono & Fandy, 2016). Influencers, in this context, refer to individuals

(public figures) on social media who have a significant number of followers, and the messages they convey can influence or respond to the behavior of their followers (Tjiptono & Fandy, 2016). The successful utilization of influencers depends on the suitability of the influencer's characteristics to the product they represent. The audience's interest in an influencer can easily influence them, utilizing this interest in the persuasion process (Sugiharto, Ramadhana, Rezi, 2018).

Influencers can be categorized into three types: a. Mega Influencers: These are prominent celebrities who are popular in the real and virtual world. They already have strong personal branding, requiring no additional establishment by a brand. The number of followers on their social media reaches more than 1 million people. Examples are Agnes Monica, Ayu Ting Ting, Raffi Ahmad, and Raisa. b. Macro Influencers: Are professional creators who share their lives with a focus on a specific topic. Their follower count ranges from 100,000 to 1 million people. Examples include Alexander Thian (Writer and Traveler), Ryan Adriandhy (Stand Up and Animator), and Putu Aditya (Writer and Videographer). c. Micro Influencer: These are individuals with between 1,000 to 100,000 followers. Often referred to as buzzers, they are known for providing authentic reviews based on experience, building trust from companies and followers.

In the context of advertising, influencers deliver persuasive messages containing valuable information, often involving product reviews or other informative content, with a personal aesthetic touch to create a pleasant experience for their followers (Lou, 2019). An influencer's appeal is not only visual but should also be based on credibility and a deep understanding of the product they represent (Hill, 2018). The success of influencers in advertising can involve both logic and emotion, where authentic and audience-relevant representations are considered more effective in reaching and influencing consumers from different walks of life (Schiffman, 2008). The popularity and reputation of influencers greatly influence the level of consumer trust in the advertised product or brand (Shimp, 2003), and have been proven to be an effective means of building solid relationships between brands and their consumers (Hamalainen, 2016).

Social Media

Social media is an internet-based technology that facilitates conversation (Tjiptono & Fandy, 2016). Social media has several characteristics, including the importance of information, the ability to store and disseminate information, and form communication networks between users (Nasrullah & Rulli, 2017).

Influencers bring a dimension of credibility and measurable focus in every promotion. Good credibility allows them to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, while a clear focus on the product is reflected in multimedia content, such as videos, photos and audio (Sugiharto, Ramadhana, Rezi, 2018). Influencer content provides audiences with a foundation for

evaluating their choices in purchasing decisions, including product, brand, and purchase channel choices (Priansa & Donni, 2017).

Social media is also characterized by popularity, which encourages users to create potentially viral content. Content that has high popularity and virality on social media can create a significant spreading effect among users (Vallet et al., 2017). The use of social media, such as YouTube and Twitter, allows users to plan content with viral potential and predict the extent to which content can spread.

Blogger

According to the Oxford dictionary, a blogger is someone who regularly writes on an internet-connected page or platform. Digital marketing, in essence, is the application of the internet and related digital technologies in an effort to achieve marketing objectives (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2016:11). In this context, digital marketing can improve the understanding of consumers, enabling focused communication and online services according to their individual needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applies a descriptive qualitative method by adopting a literature review approach. This approach involves analyzing literature from previous studies that are relevant to the object of research. Data was collected through documentation techniques by carefully reviewing indexed journals at both national and international levels. Information from these sources is then combined to form a new literature that discusses the theory of influencer role strategies in improving goods and services products.

RELIABLE RESEARCH

Table. 1 Relevant Research

No	Researcher/Year/Titles	Methodology	Goals	Research Results
1	The Role of Digital Influences in the Diffusion of New Products (Maden 2019)	This study was a descriptive study using quantitative content analysis	Through an investigation into the verbal and visual texts of Instagram posts, This research seeks to understand the diffusion of new products through digital influencers	These findings indicate the 'product category' of NPE supported by DI. A total of 128 uploads are divided into 24 categories, of which the most frequently uploaded are clothes. The post is evaluated as (or considered to be) 'spontaneous or professional', meaning that whether influencers share content due to brand collaboration with economic incentives or simply by voluntary will

Continued Table. 1 Relevant Research

No	Researcher/Year/Titles	Methodology	Goals	Research Results
2	Brand communication through digital influencers: Leveraging blogger engagement (Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014)	Qualitative Research with literature review (Library Study)	This study outlines the role of bloggers in brand communication, and reveals how they can engage with bloggers, who are currently considered online opinion leaders, from the perspective of two-step flow theory	Based on the findings from the interview, We propose a model that leverages the influencer role of bloggers from the perspective of two-step flow theory. This model is named as a model of brand communication through digital influencers
3	The impact of digital influencers' characteristics on purchase intention of fashion products (Gomez et al, 2022)	The mixed method approach was carried out by combining interviews	The purpose of the research is to investigate the direct and indirect relationships of trust, expertise, content quality, similarity, para-social interaction, and the relationship between content and content. and the attitude towards posts is responsible for purchasing intentions	Research results show that blog content quality and para-social interaction positively affect purchasing intentions in fashion brands. In addition, blog content quality plays a mediating role between trust and purchase intention
4	Online Engagement and the Role of Digital Influencers in Product Endorsement on Instagram (Silva et al, 2020)	A qualitative approach is used to investigate uploads of digital influencers based on semiotic image analysis and critical incident techniques	This article aims to analyze the forms of engagement resulting from product support by digital influencers on Instagram, and to analyze the forms of engagement that result from product support by digital influencers. taking into account the characteristics of their online posts	The results of this study reinforce that digital platforms enable different forms of engagement by building new configurations that influence relationship marketing and promotion strategies
5	Digital product innovation within four classes of innovation networks (Lyytinen et al, 2016)	Research using qualitative method with literature review	Research aims to analyze how ongoing digitalization of product innovation is reshaping the creation and sharing of knowledge in innovation networks	We argue that the advancement of digital technology (1) increases the connectivity of innovation networks by reducing communication costs and increasing their reach and scope and (2)

Continued Table. 1 Relevant Research

No	Researcher/Year/Titles	Methodology	Goals	Research Results
				increases the speed and scope of digital convergence, which increases the heterogeneity of network knowledge and the need for integration
6	Digital twin-driven product design, manufacturing and service with big data (Tao et al, 2018)	Research uses descriptive qualitative	This study first investigated the application of Digital twin-engineered design, manufacturing, and product service methods and frameworks	The overall results of this study can be summarized as follows: (1) In order to address data-related problems in the product life cycle, this study proposes an innovative method for the design, manufacturing, and service of products supported by digital twins. (2) This research explores in-depth the methods and frameworks of digital twin-driven design, manufacturing, and product services
7	Analysis of the role of digital influencers and their impact on the functioning of the contemporary on-line promotional system and its sustainable development (Wielki, 2020)	Qualitative method with literature review	The purpose of this article is to analyze the role, place, and significance of digital influencers in the overall functionality of online promotion systems, and the impact of influencer marketing concepts on their ongoing development	Research results suggest that there is great potential for activities involving digital influencers. This potential is primarily concerned with the effective transmission of information about a product or service, its impact on increased brand awareness, and its impact on the sales levels of products and services offered by companies

Source: Data processed by researchers (2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Influencers

Influencers are defined as individuals or actors who have the capability to influence purchasing decisions through their personal views, advice, or opinions (Hanindharputri & Putra, 2019). Unlike celebrities who only focus on entertainment, the role of influencers involves a broader realm, including the delivery of information, education, and the process of persuasion to the audience (Jiang, 2018). The credibility of an influencer is assessed based on how they

publicize their lifestyle and daily activities, along with the expansion of relationships and the formation of close relationships with their followers (Karouw & Worang, 2019).

Moreover, an influencer is able to shape a brand image in a more cost-efficient manner when compared to the use of artist services. The selection of influencers is based on their ability, expertise, popularity, and personal reputation (Hariyanti & Wirapraja, 2018). In Ledbetter's perspective, an influencer functions as an intermediary between brands and consumers, utilizing a high level of openness and social influence to achieve a certain level of success. As a party that tries to influence others to take certain actions, influencers become a crucial element in shaping the relationship between brands and consumers.

Advantages of Using Influencers

1. **Increase Brand Awareness:** Collaboration with influencers can provide an increase in brand interest, which includes coverage and engagement. Brand awareness can strengthen the relationship between brands and consumers, shaping brand understanding and retention.
2. **Expanding Target Market:** By carefully selecting influencers, companies can expand their target market. The process of evaluating segmentation and focusing on marketing strategies can help identify groups that have the potential to provide a positive response.
3. **Build Closeness with Consumers:** Being active on social media, such as responding to comments and messages, helps build rapport with consumers. The influencer's credibility, gained through trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and attractiveness, can build consumer trust in the brand.
4. **Increase Sales** Digital marketing strategies with influencer engagement can be key to increasing sales, especially if closely monitored through available analytics. The use of social media performance analysis apps or independent analytics can help monitor the effectiveness of this strategy. Influencer marketing, as an advertising communication strategy, emphasizes the role of key individuals or opinion leaders to build brand trust (Scott, 2015).

The success of an influencer in building a positive image and increasing their credibility can strengthen their ability to carry out product or brand marketing communication activities (Schouten, Janssen, Verspaget, 2020). An influencer plays an important role in conveying information about products, with the main goal of significantly increasing sales and creating a positive image of the company in the eyes of consumers (Hariyanti, 2020).

The use of social media is not only a platform for self-actualization, but also a business tool that can be used for marketing. Social media is not only a place to interact, but also a channel to get reviews and information about products or services. This can capture the attention and response of customers, influence their purchasing decisions, and potentially increase sales transactions.

Factors Increasing Product Sales and Repurchase Decisions

Repurchase, which refers to the act of consumers buying products or services without any special feelings towards the purchase, can be influenced by customer loyalty to a store, brand, or supplier (Ng et al., 2020). This loyalty is reflected in consistent purchases and includes behaviors such as cross-purchasing products or services, providing references, and showing immunity to competitors (Severesia et al., 2022).

Repurchase can be broken down into two consumer behaviors: a. Repeat Problem Solving: Appears when consumers are not satisfied with the previous product and choose another alternative or when the first purchase has been a long time and has undergone many changes (Tunjungsari et al., 2020). b. Habitual Behavior: Seen in individuals who continue to buy the same brand or product. This can be due to loyalty to the brand or product or due to convenience, where individuals are reluctant to evaluate alternatives.

Promotion

Promotion, as a company's activity to provide information, persuade, influence, and remind consumers to buy products, involves various elements such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing (Muzakir & Wulandari, 2020).

Promotion objectives include three main aspects:

1. Providing Information: Increase awareness of new products, explain how products work, suggest new uses, and build a company image.
2. Persuading Target Customers: Encourage brand switching, change perceptions of product attributes, influence current purchases, and woo customers to visit.
3. Remind: Remind consumers of the need for products in the near future, remind them where to buy products, and maintain consumer awareness.

Promosi juga dapat berpengaruh pada minat untuk melakukan pembelian ulang. Promotion can also affect the interest in making repeat purchases. The application of promotional prices, such as price reductions or increasing product quantity, can increase value and encourage repeat purchases (Vasan, 2021). Through effective promotions, potential customers can understand product information and be motivated to make purchases. The success of promotion is also related to building communication, trust, and avoiding suspicion to motivate customers to make repeat purchases (Dawes, 2018).

Product

Products, which include everything that can be offered to the market to satisfy consumer wants or needs, involve complex properties that are palpable or non-palpable (Gaiardelli et al., 2021). This includes aspects such as packaging, color, price, brand prestige, service, and embodiment that are recognized by buyers.

Products undergo a life cycle involving four stages, namely introduction, growth, maturity, and decline (Jasmani et al., 2020). Each stage has its own characteristics, ranging from high promotional costs in the introduction stage to rapid sales growth in the growth stage. Understanding these stages helps companies to take appropriate strategies in marketing their products.

Product Life Cycle and its Effect on Marketing Decisions

Growth Stage

In the growth stage of the product life cycle, sales increase faster than promotional costs, and profits also increase (Kjaer et al., 2019). This is due to several factors, including:

- a. Promotional costs are spread over a larger volume: As sales grow, promotional costs can be spread over a larger volume, resulting in a lower cost per unit.
- b. Production costs per unit fall faster than price declines: Producers' expertise and production efficiency make per-unit production costs fall faster than price declines, resulting in increased profits.

Maturity Stage

The maturity stage occurs when the sales growth rate slows down, and the product enters a period of relative maturity. This stage lasts a long time and is a tough challenge for marketing management. Most products are at the maturity stage, which makes management focus on marketing strategies for mature products.

Decline Stage

In the decline stage, most products experience a decline in sales. Factors causing this decline include technological developments, shifting consumer tastes, and intensifying competition. The decline in sales can be slow, and companies have to face challenges such as overcapacity, price wars, and profit erosion. Some companies may decide to exit the market, while those that survive may reduce product offerings or reduce promotional budgets.

Factors Affecting Consumer Purchasing Decisions

Some of the factors that influence consumer purchasing decisions include product quality, which includes not only responsible features, but also attributes and benefits perceived by customers (Qalati et al., 2021). Product quality can be measured through performance, durability, features, reliability, aesthetics, and perceived quality (Peña-García et al., 2020).

Price

Price is the element of the marketing mix that generates revenue, while other elements incur costs (Mohammed & Murova, 2019). The understanding of price involves the amount of

money charged for a product or service, and it includes all the value provided by the customer to benefit from the product or service (Konuk, 2019).

There are five objectives of pricing:

1. Survival: Setting a price below total cost or below the market price to survive in the short term.
2. Maximize Current Profit: Setting the lowest possible price to maximize profit assuming the market is price sensitive.
3. Maximizing Sales Yield (Maximum Current Revenue): Understand the demand function to maximize sales results and gain a large market share.
4. Maximum Market Skimming: Setting a high price initially and then lowering it or releasing a product at a lower price.
5. Determinant Demand: Setting prices to influence demand and prevent fierce competition.

Pricing on new products can use skimming pricing or penetration pricing strategies, each with specific objectives (Hermiyenti & Wardi, 2019). Skimming pricing provides high prices with vigorous promotion, while penetration pricing sets low prices initially to gain a large market share and prevent competition (Mamedov et al., 2022).

Review of established product pricing strategies: companies should periodically evaluate the pricing strategies of products that have been introduced in the market (Nico Gerard Doan & Ali, 2021). In this regard, there are several factors that motivate the need for a review:

1. Changes in the Market Environment: If major competitors reduce the prices of their products, the company must respond by adjusting its pricing strategy to remain competitive.
2. Shifts in Demand: If there are changes in consumer tastes or demand levels, price adjustments may be necessary.

Alternative price review strategies: in reviewing product prices, companies have three strategy options: a) Maintain Price: The objective is to maintain the position in the market and strengthen the positive image of the company in the eyes of the public. b) Lower Prices: This strategy is difficult to implement as it requires substantial financial resources. Reasons for lowering prices may involve defensive, offensive or response strategies to customer needs. c) Raising Prices: Undertaken to maintain profitability during inflationary periods and to map out specific markets. Two key conditions are relatively low price elasticity and support from other marketing mix elements.

Brand

The important role of brands in marketing: brands play a key role in marketing strategy, and consideration of brands is often a determining factor in consumer purchasing decisions (Rahmah et al., 2018). Brand definitions include:

1. Brand as a name, word, sign, design symbol, or a combination of all of them that identifies a particular manufacturer or seller of products and services.
2. Brand as a consideration factor taken by consumers before making a purchase, is a long-term strategy with significant economic value.
3. Brand Equity and Its Measurement: Brand equity is used to measure the performance of a brand, with five main dimensions (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020):
 - a. Brand Awareness: The level of recognition or memory of potential buyers of the brand (Novansa, 2017).
 - b. Brand Association: Everything related to brand associations in consumers' memories.
 - c. Perceived Quality: The consumer's perception of the quality or superiority of the brand's products or services.
 - d. Brand Loyalty: The level of consumer loyalty to the brand.

Marketing Strategy with Influencer Utilization: With the advancement of technology, marketing strategies are getting more sophisticated, including the use of influencers as a marketing tool. The selection of influencers is based on their ability, popularity and reputation. They can form a positive image for the brand, convey information, and build consumer trust (Cornelia & Pasharibu, 2020). The use of influencers has proven to be effective especially among millennials who tend to rely on User Generated Content (UGC), such as reviews and testimonials, in making purchasing decisions. By utilizing influencers, companies can increase public trust, expand brand awareness, and reach target markets more effectively, especially in the digital era dominated by the millennial generation.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, several conclusions can be drawn based on the results and discussions that have been carried out:

1. Marketing Potential of the Modern Era: Marketing potential in the modern era is highly dominated by efforts through social media accessed through personal devices. The internet, especially social media, is the main platform for companies to reach consumers.
2. Influencer Marketing as a Marketing Strategy: Marketing strategies through influencer marketing have proven to be effective in the context of digital marketing. Using influencers as intermediaries can expand reach and increase brand appeal.
3. Efficiency in Promotional Expenditure: The utilization of influencer marketing can significantly cut down the cost spent on promotion. It can be an efficient and effective alternative to traditional marketing methods.
4. Enhanced Brand Image and Consumer Awareness: The application of influencer marketing proves to be very suitable for effectively enhancing brand image and gaining consumer attention, which in turn increases brand awareness.

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