

Use of Key Opinion Leader Non Public Figure in Persuasive Audiences

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Abstract: The use of Key Opinion Leader (KOL) strategy is now a widely used strategy in marketing. KOL Usually use public figure, because it is easier to influence audiences. The effective role of KOL is not only affecting but also changing the behaviour of the audience. KOL affects a mass audience of the behaviours and messages it distributes. Especially now the rampant use of marketing strategies through social media. Similarly, this study aim to knowing the implementation of KOL strategy at the level of SMEs in influencing the audience. To study the problem, it is used case study method, in order to conduct in-depth assessment. This research yields some findings that SMEs business actors can be KOL for their own products, and influence their audiences even though not a public figure. Non-public figure KOL way to influence the audience by building personal branding on the perpetrators of SMEs associated with the product. Also make sure that KOL has more knowledge than its audience. Then build a network to disseminate information related to products and SMEs actors. In order to disseminate information is not too subjective and considered balanced so effective in influencing audiences.

1 INTRODUCTION

The many phenomena of using a Key Opinion Leader (KOL) as a marketing communication strategy, has a role in influencing the public (T. W. Valente & Pumpuang, 2007). The KOL strategy was initially used in the marketing strategy of pharmaceutical product marketing (Sismondo, 2015). In the pharmaceutical industry the role of a doctor as a KOL is very influential to his patients. In fact, sometimes doctors are paid to become KOL in order to prescribe the prescribed medication (Marketing, 2008). Currently KOL is no longer used in the pharmaceutical world alone, the massive characteristic of KOL in influencing others is persuasive as being effective in influencing consumers in making purchasing decisions (Langner, Hennigs, & Wiedmann, 2013). KOL characters that can affect consumer opinions and behavior, even KOL can build a new trend (Howard et al., 2000).

Especially in today's digital age, where consumers are very easily influenced by references by others (Huhn, Brantes Ferreira, Sabino de Freitas, & Leão, 2018).

The use of the KOL strategy typically uses a well-known and massive figure like the famous artist or character (Phan, Zubcsek, & Lu, 2015). Because they usually have the ability to influence mass. In addition to artists, in the digital age of KOL can also use "selebgram" or a figure that many followers in social media (Maghfiroh & Hapsari, 2014). The constraint is that the cost of recruiting public figures as KOL is enormous (Phan et al., 2015). It is considered burdensome for the perpetrators of SMEs who have limited capital for promotion, but SMEs also need to do the strategy KOL. Especially in the digital age, where everyone searches for information and references via the internet, and disseminates information to others, making the use of KOL has an important role (Huhn et al., 2018). Therefore, the perpetrators of SMEs make themselves as a KOL in influencing consumers.

The use of internet through social media as a media marketing communication strategy of SMEs is considered most appropriate, because of the low cost incurred (Derham, Cragg, & Morrish, 2011). Supported by the use of social media that has a great impact to disseminate information (Huhn et al., 2018). Given the characteristics of society in the

digital era that rely more on information accessed through digital media. Neither is the marketing communication strategy through highly effective digital media especially supported by KOL strategy (Chan, 2012). Based on the exposure, the focus studied in this research is the strategy of SMEs actors in using KOL in influencing consumers.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Key Opinion Leader (KOL)

Key opinion leader (KOL) or also known as influencer, originated from word of mouth strategy (Woods, 2016). KOL is an application of innovation diffusion theory, both of which are the concept of influencing audiences with new information (T. Valente & Davis, 1999). Based on innovation diffusion theory, that role of KOL is important to influence its audience (Scott & McGuire, 2017). This is caused every message submitted by KOL is a message that contains elements of innovation, in order to more easily affect audiences. KOL is one strategy that aims to influence others, especially consumers (Phan et al., 2015). KOL is a figure where every communication message it conveys can affect the audience (T. W. Valente & Pumpuang, 2007). KOL usually uses public figures in running its strategy (Phan et al., 2015). This is because the public figure already has a fan base that is easily influenced. In today's digital age, KOL strategies are widely used as marketing communications strategies (Huhn et al., 2018). The magnitude of the influence of digital media also affects consumer behavior (Messiaen, 2017). In the digital age, consumers are more confident in suggestions submitted by others. So KOL is considered more effective than the use of advertising in mass media and other traditional advertising media (Messiaen, 2017).

In Selecting KOL or influencer must be selective, because not everyone can be made as KOL (Chan, 2012). If first we think of artists that can only affect audiences, this time is no longer (Phan et al., 2015). The development of the social media era gave birth to new figures who were not well known in the mass media, but had large followers or fans, calling them celebgrams or vloggers (Maghfiroh & Hapsari, 2014). In spreading the message, KOL prefers organic content. This means content that invites audiences to interact directly with the brand used (Chan, 2012). Characteristics of KOL that can affect audiences by possessing a character who always

innovates in producing messages (Chan, 2012). Messages produced by KOL must have a demographically higher level than the recipient. Personally KOL must be optimistic, gregarious, open minded, always communicating in two directions, bringing new innovations to be shared, and most importantly having a narcissistic character in itself (Langner et al., 2013). And most importantly that a KOL should be well informed about the characteristics of the information being disseminated (Chan, 2012).

2.2 Development of Micro Small Medium Enterprises

In 2012, the growth of SMEs in Indonesia reached 56,534,592. From that number, SMEs still face many problems (Sarwono, 2015). First, the average of SMEs in Indonesia is weak in management (Setyawan Agus, Isa, Wajdi, Syamsudin, & Nugroho Permono, 2015). This is because SMEs in Indonesia have low human resources, visible from the minimum number of SMEs who already use bookkeeping methods in their business reports. Second, the weakness of human resources also impact on the character of SMEs in Indonesia is a bit bankable (Setyawan Agus et al., 2015). This is what always makes SME in Indonesia have problems with capital. Third, there are still many SMEs in Indonesia who do not have business entity as their business legality (Ferri, Rosli, & Kader, 2012). Fourth, SMEs in Indonesia still lack innovation both in terms of product and marketing, which causes SMEs products difficult to develop (Setyawan Agus et al., 2015). In addition, marketing is still a constraint for SMEs in Indonesia (Handayani, P. W., & Lisdianingrum, 2011). SMEs in Indonesia mostly in the marketing process does not emphasize the brand but only on the product (Handayani, P. W., & Lisdianingrum, 2011). Although the products produced by SME have been labeled, but the label is not done branding activities (Irfayanti & Azis, 2012). SMEs in Indonesia are difficult to establish differentiation (Handayani, P. W., & Lisdianingrum, 2011). Because communities in Indonesia happy to be a follower of a well-known product. The marketing of SMEs products in Indonesia is also constrained by the lack of innovation in marketing the products, the use of social media as a marketing communication strategy has not been maximal (Handayani, P. W., & Lisdianingrum, 2011). Usually managed are the perpetrators of young SMEs, because it used to interact with social media. Thus, they can follow the digital consumer's habits (Chan, 2012)..

3 METHOD

This study was studied qualitatively by using multiple case study methods with deep and narrow exploration of unique phenomena about the role of KOL in SMEs. Multiple case studies will produce some reference data for the material of the phenomenon analysis (Chetty, 1996). Case study is also a study done in social sciences qualitatively to understand every social phenomenon that occurs between human life (Stake, 2014). Focus assessment using case studies emphasizes the question of how and why (Chetty, 1996). Similarly, in this study more study questions of why and how, so that the process in a phenomenon more can be described. Assessment by in-depth interview to every resource and documentation study. In-depth interviews were conducted with resource persons by building closeness in the relationship. Because through the proximity of resources will be more freely describe the information relating to research data. And the most important in conducting interviews informants do not feel being interrogated, but the perceived resource is like being told by *denggan* his friend.. The results of interviews and documentation studies are then carried out data reduction, to classify data through degree constructs. With the technique of data validity using triangulation of data both source, technique and time. The goal is to make sure that the answer from the resource is fixed, and not changeable. This study examines two sub-discussions, the first strategy for choosing the right KOL for SMEs. Second, the strategy of KOL in persuasive and influence the audience. Informants in this peneiltian are the perpetrators of SMEs in the city of Bandung, the SMEs Products Zanana, Sheika Hijab, and Hijra Moslem Apparel, Smith who successfully use the strategy of KOL in marketing its products.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

The results of this study indicate, if the perpetrators of SMEs require a new breakthrough in strategy marketing. Increasing competition between SMEs requires new ways to attract the attention of the consusers. The high cost of promotion becomes an obstacle for the perpetrators of SMEs, especially at the start-up level in conducting marketing communication strategy.

If large companies can easily attract attention by using advertising media, and brand ambassadors derived from public figures, it is not surprising if they can easily attract the attention of consumers. But for the starters of SMEs start-up level where they have limited capital, of course it is *Sesutu* that is difficult to be realized.

From the results of interviews related to the need for marketing communications strategies, all SMEs actors said they need effective marketing communication strategies to promote their products. Another obstacle that faced in terms of material promotion.

Their idea of using models to influence consumers is the result of their observation of large companies. Where usually large companies managed to make the model as a marketing communication strategy. Then they make their creation with the state of their business condition. To be able to influence their consumers using the model, but not from the public figure. *Zanana* and *Sheika Hijab* they prefer the owner to serve as a communicator. While *Hijra Moslem apparel* chose a colleague from their owner, who has arabic blood to model. And *Smith* chose their consumers as communicators.

While their way to spread the influence of their marketing messages to consumers vary. *Zanana* put forward *Gazan* as the owner, through the stories of his success to become a successful entrepreneur at a young age. From the beginning *Gazan* pioneered an active effort in various entrepreneurial communities. This makes *Gazan's* social environment wider. *Gazan* does not have a formal education in business and entrepreneurship, but *Gazan* is active in entrepreneurial and business workshops and seminars. That's what makes science in the field of business and entrepreneurship continues to increase. The advantages of *Gazan*, he always apply every science he got from workshops and seminars. Supported by diligence and focus in running his business to make business *Gazan* with *Zanana* chips successfully penetrated the global market.

Gazan's success in running his business today is widely reviewed in articles both in the mass media and also in social media. One article with business title capital Rp 50 thousand now reach Rp 400 million, has been widely accessed in social media. Supported by the success of *Gazan* who won the business idea contest 2016 and get a gift of additional capital worth Rp 500 million. *Gazan's* success in running his business has often been invited as a speaker in entrepreneurship and business seminars. Since then *Zanana's* sales turnover has

continued to increase, especially when Gazan was a speaker at a seminar.

Sheika Hijab uses the characteristic of Gita Rismawati as owner in every message disseminated through social media. Every photo submitted through social media account is a photo with Gita characteristic. The marketing messages that are disseminated are interactive with the characteristics of the Gita. Sheika hijab who also uses Gita as the owner in influencing the consumer by making the message according to its characteristics. Because sheika hijab products target female consumers, they are syncing all their marketing messages with their customers. Characteristics Gita as a woman is a common characteristic of women in general, cheerful, fun, happy chatting, feminine, poured in every photo and marketing message through social media. Characteristics of chatting poured in a marketing message berbetuk questions that require answers from each consumer. The technique is successful in luring consumers to submit their arguments that can be used as market research for Sheika Hijab.

Hijra Moslem apparel builds a marketing message through the customization of their Muslim-style products with models identical to Muslim culture. Each of their photos is presented with Arabic descent models. As we know Arab culture is closely related to Muslim culture. The model used is not a figure figure public figure. But through the use of models with the blood of Arab descent, dapat presented their products well. Seen from the large public interest on their products since the use of these strategies.

While Smith uses consumers to expand the distribution of marketing communications content. The strategy of leveraging consumers in helping spread the marketing message. Consumers are actively involved in promoting their products. Through the cash back program, Smith can lure consumers to take pictures using their products and disseminated in social media. Influence is felt, although cash back is given only 10%, tetapi interactive content built and smith reposting messages sent consumers can attract consumer interest. Based on the results of research, it is precisely that attract consumers to follow the activity is not because cash back they get, but there is pride if their photos and messages in the reposting by the Smith.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Strategies for the Proper Use of KOL for SMEs

KOL is instrumental in influencing consumers, both through its figure and its message. It uses many public figures or artists in influencing its customers (Phan et al., 2015). The problem is the use of public figures and artists require a large cost, while the problem of SMEs limited capital promotion. This becomes contradictory in carrying out promotional strategies. Finally, many SMEs are not appropriate in using KOL strategy. Some in the social media post SMEs actors display photos of their products with a public figure. Unfortunately, SMEs do not make the appropriate KOL concept for their products. The perpetrators of SMEs only display photos, without full explanation with the product. In addition, the perpetrators of SMEs also do not consider the suitability of KOL target market with the product. The rest of the perpetrators of SMEs rely more on off line marketing strategy in influencing consumers through the power of word of mouth. This is similar to that of Renik s and Chen (2011) (Resnick & Cheng, 2011), that SME, although using digital marketing strategy but not very influential, still their strength is word of mouth offlines.

Gazan and Gita are SMEs actors who accidentally make themselves as KOL for their respective products. While Hijra Moslem Apparel and Smith can build relationship with stakeholder to do marketing communication without using public figure. Surely this becomes a new breakthrough, where KOL usually uses public figures that have fan base to be easily influenced, while they use their own owners, partners and consumers as KOL (Phan et al., 2015). Based on the results of KOL research is very effective to influence a small group, but has strong ties (Moldovan, Muller, Richter, & Yom-Tov, 2017). In this case the small group is assumed to be a small-scale SMEs organization that has a small scale and a limited market environment for its customers. But it is actually used by them to close to the consumer, through marketing message so easy to influence the audience. This small scope is certainly more of a similarity factor than its khalayk, making it easy to diffuse information according to innovation diffusion theory (T. W. Valente & Davis, 1999). This is in line with the diffusion theory of innovation where every marketing message they make is always concerned with the suitability of the message, showing the novelty of the product, the marketing message is easy to accept, making it easy for customers to accept. This

type of marketing message that bolts those who are not from the public figure can be a KOL can also influence its audience as it brings innovation in marketing messages in accordance with innovation diffusion theory (Scott & Mcguire, 2017). In addition to the concept of innovation diffusion theory also makes the perpetrators of SMEs to be able to build a network that can help them in running their business (Ceci & Iubatti, 2012). It is also used by the four speakers in helping the success of their marketing message. In explanation, the relationship built by them becomes a key to facilitating the building of marketing messages, and making marketing messages more acceptable.

Gazan's scholarship is considered to be more adept, Gita's sincerity on every customer, making them successful in influencing consumers. Proximity consumers built by Hijra Moslem Apparel and Smith can be a way to build a network on consumers so that the message it conveys has organic content that is easily trusted by consumers. This is in line with what Chan Kenny K (Chan, 2012), which explains higher knowledge and organic content can easily affect audiences, and it must be owned by a KOL.

4.2.2 KOL Strategy Non Public Figure in Persuasive Audience

At the beginning of Zanana's appearance, Gazan as its owner built a marketing strategy by beginning to analyze consumers from Zanana. This is shown by knowing who segmentation and target of Zanana consumers, so that every marketing message more effectively accepted by consumers. Consumer analysis can make Gazan a specific KOL in delivering marketing messages, as described in innovation diffusion theory (Scott & Mcguire, 2017). There have been many studies that discuss the importance of building market segmentation as suggested by Dibb and sally (Dibb, 1908) that market segmentation can build the right consumer. From the results of the analysis Gazan know that most consumers are young people, therefore most of the spread of Zanana marketing messages conducted in social media. Because based on research of young people or generation of "why" spend more time to the virtual world than the real world. Like Gazan who age is also included in the generation of "why", so what it does as well as his habit to move on social media. The use of social media communication channels by Gazan as a KOL as an attempt to influence its audience, as it follows the media that is widely accessed by its khalyak (Scott & Mcguire, 2017).

In every opportunity, Gazan always tells about Zanana. Starting from the success story of Zanana, the postings on personal accounts of social media are mostly related to Zanana. This continues until now, so eventually unknowingly formed a personal branding that links Gazan with Zanana. So when consumers find Zanana it will automatically remember Gazan. This benefits Gazan as KOL, because audiences have easily recognized Zanana's products through Gazan. In essence Gazan as KOL successfully builds differentiation on Zanana and the style of building a marketing message. So that consumers can build Zanana positioning in mind, until finally can build personal branding. This is in accordance with what was presented by Renik s and Chen (Resnick & Cheng, 2011), that the characteristics of SMEs is the habit to conduct their own product marketing process. Until finally formed personal branding.

Every marketing message on Zanana's social media does not really highlight the Gazan figure in every post. There are only a few posts that feature Gazan in messages on social media. But Gazan often appears in digital media articles exploring the success of his business. This is actually in line with the KOL concept, let other people talk about you. As a manager of his own business Gazan certainly will not be immediately trusted when talking about its own products, but the various articles review of the bloggers and digital media presents the same thing as what Gazan delivered as KOL. This opinion is in line with what Hunt (Huhn et al., 2018) suggests, that external recommendations would be more credible. Building a network in social media with bloggers and other digital media, can be used as a means to strengthen and balance the information disampain by SMEs own actors. Because the balanced information about the product just seems more natural than the language of advertising is exaggerated, so that more can affect. This is in contrast to Andreas (Chacoma & Zanette, 2015) explains that a KOL should be a person who has a stubborn character. The more he insists his opinion, then the more trusted by his audience. Gazan and Gita actually make the message as natural as possible. If Gazan more on memebikan information in the articles that exist about him not only show its superiority only. But the story of a previous business trip that went bankrupt, it gives the color of sincerity that impressed what it is. While Gita think more of her tinge with the consumers who are also women with personality characteristics that are not too much different. So he reflects every message he conveys as he is communicating with himself. As a result, the audience reading the article felt this was

not a hyperbole-filled ad language, because the message contains the intrigue that becomes the attraction of the marketing message. Intrigue becomes the thing that makes marketing messages more favorable to consumers (Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005). Such a sincere story to motivate that one's business travel is never smooth. Then it can easily affect audiences.

Hijra Moslem Apparel and Smith they prefer the role of third parties in conveying their experience of the product. Third parties are considered more readily accepted by consumers than when they speak for themselves as agency representatives even though they are not from public figures (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). In addition, Hijra Moslem Apparel and Smith utilize their communications network. In addition, the selection of influencers from parties who have similarities with their customers make Hijra Moslem Apparel more easily accepted (Setiawati Sri Dewi & Anggara.Reddy, 2017). The similarity of perspective between Hijra Moslem Apparel and its consumers about the cultural background and purpose of migrating make marketing messages more acceptable.

While Smith is clear that they are using their own customers to spread marketing. in these circumstances precisely consumers are not aware when they used as a marketing tool for Smith. Building relationships with consumers becomes Smith's way of building a marketing strategy. exploiting the pride of every customer that Smith entails in their marketing message is of course a concern. Usually, consumers will be happy with the cheap price or big discount. But the program shows that consumers can be tied to institutions as long as we involve them on our business journey. Through the involvement of that cause proud consumer mind that can make a strong relationship with the institution. It is considered an effective marketing message strategy acceptable to the market and can save on promotional costs (Wilson & Consultant, 2005).

Based on the exposure, although the KOL used is not from the public figure or artist who has a fan base, but still can affect consumers. First by building personal branding associated with the product. Second, use a third party role to help disseminate KOL information. And thirdly, every message in the spread should be balanced and not exaggerate, so the message received sincerely and foster positive motivation for those who read it. Of course, the spread of messages use social media as an effort to follow the customs for customers.

5 CONCLUSION

The results of this study can be concluded that the use of KOL strategy on SMEs can use the owner and marketing communications network of each product, of course begins with building personal branding to be bound between the product with the actors of SMEs as KOL. Every marketing message should be balanced, not only show a positive message, but a neutral message and there are contradictory intricacies with the perpesktif community in general, so it is not considered an advertisement. And of course the spread of messages must use the media that is widely used by consumers, so that messages can be accepted by consumers. It is expected that this research can be developed in a more specific scope in every kind of SMEs products, because each type of product must have different marketing communication strategy.

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