

Putu Made Restaurant Micro-Influencers Strategy

Ananda Fitria

Master of Communication Science, Universitas Indonesia
anandafitriaintan@gmail.com

Abstract

Today, audiences are more selective in consuming messages on social media. When influencers with millions of followers look too regulated, micro-influencers with fewer followers are judged more authentic because of the relevance of content and context. This study aims to determine the micro-influencers strategy used by Putu Made Restaurant via Instagram. The method of this research is qualitative approach with study case as the type of research. Data collection techniques are done by interview and documentation study. The result shows that the use of micro-influencers can increase engagement of Restaurant consumers on Instagram. Furthermore, this research is expected to provide a clear picture of the use of micro-influencers as the marketing communication strategies.

Keywords:

micro-influencers; Instagram; engagement; marketing communication; strategy



I. Introduction

The use of influencers as a marketing communication tool is currently being carried out by many brands and companies. For example, Dompot Dhuafa in December 2019, when holding a Sharing Session and Influencer Meet Up event, Dompot Dhuafa collaborated with a number of influencers to campaign for the month of humanity and also invited the public to share goodness (Gita Amanda, 2019). And if you look at the trend this year, it is predicted that influencer marketing will double, as quoted from AdAge (Neil Waller, 2020). Many marketers will include influencer marketing as their priority strategy in 2020.

Influencer marketing is a new approach in marketing (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Influencer marketing is all about enabling influencers to talk about a product or service to an audience (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Marketing strategy is a plan that outlines the company's expectations of the impact of various marketing activities or programs on the demand for products or product lines in certain target markets". According to Andrews in Alma's book (2009: 199) that: "Marketing strategy is a pattern of decisions in companies that determine and express goals, intentions or goals that produce the main policy and plan for the achievement of objectives and detail the range of business that will be pursued by the company. (Chandra, in Dianto. et al)

Influencers are content creators who amass a solid base of followers. Through blogging, vlogging, or creating short-form content for example on Instagram, they provide insights to their followers about their personal experiences, daily lives, experiences and opinions (De Veirman et al., 2017).

To create an influencer marketing campaign, marketers can offer sponsorship with influencers, find influencers themselves, and inform them about the campaign they want to implement (Quesenberry, 2020). Or it could be by using one of the influencer marketing agencies and an automated system that can find, send, and pay tens or even hundreds of influencers. Influencer marketing can work for any brand, but the fashion and beauty industry

is the biggest in using influencer marketing as their marketing communication strategy (Quesenberry, 2020).

There are 3 categories of influencers when viewed from the size of the audience they have (Backaler & Shankman, 2018), namely: celebrity influencers, category influencers, and micro-influencers. Celebrity influencers are those who have fame and are able to reach a wide audience, usually they are famous athletes, musicians, and actors or those who have a very large following (more than 100,000 followers) (Backaler & Shankman, 2018). Category influencers are those who have a certain interest, expertise and enthusiasm for a topic. For example, a professional chef who likes to make videos on social media. Although not widely known, but they have considerable influence. Then there are micro-influencers which are those who have no significant online reach but who are enthusiastic about a particular topic, brand, or product (Backaler & Shankman, 2018). For example, a foodie who likes to visit a new restaurant near where he lives, then shares his post on social media and recommends it to his closest friends.

Micro-influencers are quite attractive because even though they have a smaller audience, they can generate high levels of engagement due to their better relevance of content and context (Praanesh Bhuvaneshwar, 2017). They are on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, blogs or other forms of social media that have followers in the range of 5,000 – 25,000 (Alison Hill, 2018), and have very high audience engagement rates and very high attention (Mediakix, 2020). The use of micro-influencers in a marketing communication campaign can have a high value, even higher than using macro-influencers or celebrities (Danilo Acquisto, 2019). Micro-influencers are also considered to be able to provide better influence and action when compared to sponsored content such as the use of Facebook and Google Ads (Danilo Acquisto, 2019). This is because micro-influencers have a focus on a specific topic for a product or service and also have a large engagement (or so-called engagement) with their followers (Casaló et al., 2018). Based on research from Markerly, the advantage of using micro-influencers is more engagement, because their community is very focused and really engaged. Engagement with a sufficiently reachable audience where their content is consumed and viewed, can be a way for the brand to target a more centralized audience for a marketing communications campaign.

Micro-influencers are individuals who are experts in a particular subject (Rirhandzu Shingwenyana, 2019). These individuals usually follow certain topics based on their interests and they will learn about a product or service on the market (Rirhandzu Shingwenyana, 2019). Their followers know very well that micro-influencers are experts on their favorite topics, so followers will follow them because they know that micro-influencer content is what they are looking for. This is intended to dig deeper information on a particular topic so as to make micro-influencers have the trust and credibility to convince their followers to buy the product or service of a particular brand (Rirhandzu Shingwenyana, 2019).

The geographical and social distance between micro-influencers is also closer to their followers (Lin et al., 2018). This is possible because micro-influencers interact with their relationships and followers online within the scope of their social network consisting of family or friends (Lin et al., 2018). The engagement rate of micro-influencers with 1,000 followers can be as high as 18%; 1,000-9,999 followers reaching 7.4% (Santora, 2021). In addition, the use of these micro-influencers can make brands tied to specific markets that suit their goals. Another factor that can affect the effectiveness of influencer support is the congruence between the influencer and the brand, or the similarity or consistency between the brand and the influencer (De Veirman et al., 2017).

The survey results show that Instagram dominates among micro-influencers; where 61% of influencers chose Instagram as their favorite social media network (PRNewswire-PRWeb,

2018). Instagram itself occupies the fourth position in the list of the most active social networking platforms, which is 38% (Simon Kemp, 2018). The number of active users reaches 53 million or 20% of the total population of Indonesia, and is the third most widely used application in terms of how many applications are downloaded (Simon Kemp, 2018). For Indonesia, based on data as of January 2019, Instagram occupies the third position as the most used social network, which is 80% of the 150 million active users of social media in Indonesia, or around 120 million (Simon Kemp, 2019b, 2019a).

Instagram is a social media platform that allows individuals to share images or photos (Lin et al., 2018). Founded in 2010, this application has the strength as an effective marketing communication tool that is presented visually (Ting et al., 2015). The Global Micro-Influencer Study conducted by micro-influencer marketing platform SocialPubli.com shows the results from analyzing internal campaign data and surveying 1,000 micro-influencers vetted in its global community from 22 countries, i.e. micro-influencers play an important role as a viable marketing strategy and effective (PRNewswire-PRWeb, 2018).

Another micro-influencer report by #HashOff, a leading micro-influencer marketing platform, surveyed hundreds of micro-influencers on its platform to understand what lies behind their passion and creativity. The result is that micro-influencers are emerging as an important marketing channel for both large and small brands. Brands are increasingly relying on micro-influencers to transmit their messages, as these types of influencers have higher levels of engagement and are perceived as more passionate, creative and authentic by audiences. 92% of respondents chose Instagram as their primary platform (#HASHOFF, 2017).

One of the brands that uses these micro-influencers strategy is Putu Made Restaurant. Putu Made is a restaurant that serves the taste of Bali in the capital city of Jakarta and also brings the unique philosophy of the Island of the Gods from the food. The philosophy in question is the use of 'Basa Genep', which is a balanced main ingredient consisting of galangal, turmeric, ginger, and kaempferia galangal. Putu Made is a member of the Boga Group, a company engaged in food and beverage services or restaurants. Currently Putu Made has 2 outlets; in Senayan City and at PIK Avenue. Putu Made first operated on December 7 2017, with its first outlet in Senayan City. In addition to serving authentic Balinese cuisine, Putu Made also presents a modern atmosphere that still has Balinese elements in its interior.

This research is intended to find out more about the strategy of micro-influencers and also to be able to increase knowledge of marketing communication strategies using micro-influencers that can be done by restaurant actors in Indonesia. In addition, this research is also expected to enrich knowledge, especially marketing communication.

II. Research Methods

This research method is a case study. The case study itself implies an investigation that is carried out in a variety of and in depth using qualitative research methods (Feagin et al., 1991). Seeing that micro-influencers is a relatively new concept and its development continues, further studies are needed to find out to what extent micro-influencers can be useful for marketers. Case studies are carried out descriptively, meaning that the objective to develop a detailed and complete picture of a phenomenon usually requires document review, observation, and in-depth interviews to understand perspectives, experiences, and broad views in certain circumstances (Norman K Denzin; Yvonna S Lincoln, 2018).

Therefore, data collection was carried out through interviews with Ellen Widodo as General Marketing Manager & PR of the Boga Group which oversees Putu Made restaurant. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner in order to take advantage of the potential for a more developed dialogue by looking at other points of view of the interviewees which could be important as data. In addition, semi-structured interviews also do not make the interview out of line, because the interviewer can focus the conversation on the core problem of the subject of study (Norman K Denzin; Yvonna S Lincoln, 2018). This will make the interview obtain a description that is not abstract (Norman K Denzin; Yvonna S Lincoln, 2018). The interview will be more directed to the question of how not why, to get further description, such as the example of the question, "How do you describe a situation that can involve the audience?".

III. Findings and Discussion

The semi-structured interview with Ellen Widodo was conducted via a video telephone connection on October 17, 2020. The results of the interview became a reference in the writing and discussion of this research. The case study on the implementation of the micro-influencer strategy by Putu Made restaurant is a relatively new case study in the food business sector; because so far most online marketing strategies that use micro-influencers are usually from the fashion and body care sector.

From these interviews, some interview transcripts related to this research, the researchers included in this paper in the form of quotes and the researchers connected them with theories and other findings from similar research elsewhere.

Micro-influencers are those who are ordinary people, not celebrities, who have followers (Gupta & Mahajan, 2019). In contrast to celebrities who were already famous even before the existence of social media, micro-influencers have followers who are personally connected (Gupta & Mahajan, 2019). In an interview with Ellen Widodo, General Manager of Marketing & PR at Boga Group which oversees Putu Made Restaurant; she revealed:

"Micro-influencers yang kami maksud disini adalah Influencers yang mungkin mempunyai followers 10.000 ke bawah ya. Sekitar 3.000 – 5.000. Dan mereka itu lebih ke teman-teman dan inner circle. Dan, inipun biasanya teman-teman yang mereka sudah kenal. (Micro-influencers we mean here are Influencers who may have 10,000 or less followers. Around 3,000 – 5,000. And they are more like friends and inner circle. And, these are usually friends they already know.)"

With the number of followers that are not too large, it shows a more segmented audience, so that the content uploaded by these micro-influencers reaches more audiences who really care about the content (Sophia Bernazzani, 2019).

Micro-influencers have the ability to influence their followers (Deborah Weinswig, 2016). They are also known for being a trusted source according to their field (Gupta & Mahajan, 2019). A study shows that the credibility of micro-influencers also plays a role for messages to be well received by their followers (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017). This was also expressed by Ellen Widodo based on her personal experience:

"Waktu itu pernah beli satu makanan, itu kayak nastar, pineapple nastar crumble, bentuknya kayak tart. Itu enak banget. Taunya karena dari Instagram teman; memang dia yang bikin dan dia orangnya picky eater juga ya, terus taste-nya bagus. Jadi penasaran dan cobain dan memang enak banget dan belum pernah selama ini nemuin yang kayak gitu. (I once bought one food, it was like nastar, pineapple nastar crumble, it looked like tart. That's really good. I know it's because

of a friend's Instagram; Indeed, he made it and he is a picky eater too, yes, and the taste is good. So, I was curious and tried it and it was really delicious and I've never found anything like it.)”

In addition, posts from micro-influencers are seen as more authentic and trustworthy because they post about the products or services they have tried and provide an honest view of the product or service (Sophia Bernazzani, 2019). Ellen Widodo revealed:

“Generasi millenials dan Gen Z sekarang ini mereka itu memilih barang, itu sesuai rekomendasi dari teman-teman mereka. Dan mereka sudah gak percaya untuk kayak selebriti, atau misalnya public figure. Jadi dengan strategi micro-influencers-nya lebih tinggi, ya karena memang 70% mungkin dari followers-nya adalah teman-teman mereka. Daripada misalnya kita lihat yang influencers sesungguhnya walaupun pengikutnya banyak, sudah harganya mahal, tapi stickiness-nya/engagement-nya itu kurang. (Millennials and Gen Z today are choosing goods, according to recommendations from their friends. And they no longer believe in being like celebrities, or for example public figures. So, with a higher micro-influencer’s strategy, yes, because 70% of the followers are probably their friends. Instead, for example, let's look at the real influencers; Even though he has many followers, the price for his services is expensive, but his stickiness/engagement is lacking.)”

The millennial generation itself looks for the value of a brand and chooses trusted sources and reviews before choosing to use a product or service (Michelle Krasniak, 2017). Which is related to the theory of social credibility which is also an Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This E-WOM theory talks that in influencing and conveying information to others, you can use electronic devices and social media (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), so that micro-influencers on Instagram are one of the valuable sources of information for brands/brands in targeting the millennial market.

According to Ellen Widodo's own experience in sharing her experiences with products purchased from viewing Instagram Story posts and then re-posting the product on her Instagram account, there was a word-of-mouth effect, as she explained as follows:

“Di Instagram ku ada teman yang nanya “Ini belinya di mana?”. Setelah melihat hasil post ku mengenai pineapple crumble. Terus akhirnya dia beli. Begitu dia beli, lalu dia makan dan dia merasa ini enak banget, rekomendasi dari aku, kemudian dia post juga di Instagram story dan di-mention kembali nama ku. (On my Instagram, a friend asked "Where did you buy this?". After seeing the results of my post regarding pineapple crumble. Then he finally bought it. As soon as he bought it, he ate it and he thought it was really good, a recommendation from me, then he finally posted it on his Instagram story and also mentioned my name again.)”

A study from Kay et al. (2020) show that consumers perceive a product significantly better when exposed to messages from micro-influencers. The study also states that micro-influencers also lead to higher purchase intentions of certain products than macro-influencers (Kay et al., 2020). The existence of the Instagram Story feature adds to the strong influence of micro-influencers, where Instagram Stories are indeed designed to display videos or images from beginning to end without us having to click or tab. This causes what is uploaded by the micro-influencer to appear on all of their followers' accounts without having to ask the followers to click or swipe the video. So that the engagement process between micro-

influencers and their followers continues to build and is getting more intense. This is also recognized by Ellen Widodo in her statement:

“Sekarang kalau dilihat journey-nya, lebih ke Instagram story. Instagram story walaupun kita gak swipe dia akan jalan terus. Jadi kita tahu semuanya. Instagram story pun harganya lebih mahal kalau kita mau pakai influencers. (Now if you look at the journey, it's more of an Instagram story. Instagram story even if we don't swipe it will continue. So, we know everything. Instagram stories are also more expensive if we want to use influencers.)”

As we know, Instagram is a visual platform. In the Instagram application, users can use everything related to visuals through their smartphone applications, such as taking photos and videos, editing, and adding filters (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Users can also share photos and videos via 'Instagram Story'. This Instagram Story feature was first introduced in 2016, a feature that allows users to post photos or videos that will last for 24 hours. With this Instagram Story feature, many brands use it as a content distribution to increase exposure and branding purposes (Casey Newton, 2016; Josh Constine, 2016; Sophia Bernazzani, 2021). In the Instagram Story feature, there is a section that can create a 'storyboard'. Storyboards allow users to compose stories that will be presented to their audience/followers. By utilizing a 'storyboard', Instagram account users/owners can make: introduction, content, and ending of Instagram Stories more structured, so that they have a logical sequence and have a clear vision (Guest Author, 2019). The 'Storyboard' in Instagram Stories can also help create more engaging and engaging content for followers.

The use of micro-influencers in several recent studies can also increase engagement with audiences through Instagram Stories. A marketing communication strategy using micro-influencers is a great strategy that can increase brand visibility and audience engagement (Guest Author, 2019). This is possible because when a micro-influencer shares content, it will be able to increase the engagement of his followers as long as the content is relevant to the followers of the micro-influencer. This is also stated in the results of the author's interview with Mrs. Ellen Widodo:

“Dengan menggunakan strategi micro-influencers, diharapkan terjadinya engagement. Micro-influencers biasanya orang biasa dan followersnya adalah teman-teman sendiri. Dan rekomendasi dari teman sendiri lebih berhasil untuk generasi milenial. Micro-influencers yang dipilih dari kebiasaan, tempat, penggunaan hashtag. Dengan jumlah followers 3000 - 10000. (By using the micro-influencers strategy, engagement is expected. Micro-influencers are usually ordinary people and their followers are their own friends. And recommendations from friends are more successful for millennials. Micro-influencers selected from habit, place, use of hashtags. With the number of followers 3000 – 10000.)”

The results of the author's interview with Mrs. Ellen Widodo as General Marketing Manager & PR of the Boga Group which oversees Putu Made restaurant shows one of the new strategies in marketing communication in Indonesia, especially for restaurant food products which are usually advertised massively and require large funds. The case study at the restaurant 'Putu made' is an interesting case study where the restaurant 'Putu Made' with its brand 'Bali' is promoted online through micro-influencers whose engagement with their followers is better than macro-influencers.

Micro-influencers are considered to be able to represent themselves more freely than macro-influencers, so people's level of trust in micro-influencers is usually higher. When a micro-influencer promotes something, the audience is more likely to believe that the micro-

influencer has actually tried or used the product. Authenticity and trust are very important to increase engagement, awareness, and brand recall. The cost comparison between micro-influencers and macro-influencers is also quite large. Where the cost of collaborating or using the services of a micro influencer is much cheaper than that of a macro influencer, which is only around 300-500 thousand rupiah.

The selection of the right micro-influencers will turn a particular brand into a brand that targets customers accurately and quickly. This is what in the case study the restaurant 'Putu Made' is being built and doing right now. According to Mrs. Ellen Widodo, apart from using micro-influencers, actually the restaurant 'Putu Made' also uses PageAds and several paid Ads on several social media that are integrated with the official website or official account of the restaurant brand 'Putu Made'. However, according to Mrs. Ellen, currently the most successful in engaging millennial customers and also bringing customers to restaurants or ordering food from the 'Putu Made' restaurant is the engagement generated from micro-influencers.

Determining the right target in the food and restaurant business such as 'Putu Made' is very important for the sustainability of the restaurant in the future. Putu Made restaurant itself, according to Mrs. Ellen, targets Millennials and Gen Z who are indeed the most users of social media, one of which is Instagram. Mrs. Ellen also said that, it is not 'viral' that is the goal of Putu Made's restaurant, but the main goal is 'continuity' in the future which ensures that the sustainability of Putu Made's restaurant will continue to exist in the future.

Millennials and Gen Z are a generation that believes more in friend recommendations and closeness between individuals, which can be fulfilled by micro-influencers. Mrs. Ellen also mentioned that working with micro-influencers did not always work out as she hoped; But what he clearly said was that micro-influencers increased the number of customers or visitors to the 'Putu Made' restaurant which, if seen by many millennials and Gen Z.

Several times the Putu Made restaurant has been used as a gathering place for inter-community micro-influencers that are specifically in it. This shows that the engagement level of a micro-influencer is greater than that of a macro-influencer. With a limited budget coupled with the current pandemic, the choice to use micro-influencers in a marketing communication strategy is the right choice for Putu Made restaurant where engagement and future sustainability can be built from followers' micro-influencers. This case study research teaches us that small and medium business owners should switch and start using micro-influencers to help market their products.

Instagram with its various features, as well as the presence of micro-influencers and followers, is the right combination for business people to increase their business turnover. Where all official account posts of a brand are integrated and closely related (if possible, the same as the post) with what is posted by micro-influencers who have worked with the brand. The use of Instagram stories in the case of the restaurant 'Putu Made' has a significant impact on the number of restaurant customers, both those who come directly offline, and those who order restaurant food online from their homes or offices where they work.

The case study at the Putu Made restaurant that uses the services of micro-influencers to market its products can be used as a new insight in the science of marketing communication where in the future, promotional activities no longer have to involve large funds and are sometimes less targeted. With micro-influencers, promotional funds can be more efficient because in this digital era, you don't have to make a lot of billboards/advertising posters on the streets or advertise on television; it is enough to take advantage of social media and the internet which are now mushrooming in almost all corners of the country. And also, the targeted customers/consumers will be more targeted, in accordance with the planned segmentation. This is very possible because these micro-influencers are known to focus on certain things that their followers are bound to and are happy to follow what the micro-influencer conveys/shows.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the results of interviews, documentation from several journal articles, and information from the internet plus the author's analysis of the use of Micro-Influencers Strategy in Putu Made Restaurants; it can be concluded that the use of micro-influencers on Instagram as a marketing communication strategy is the right step for times like this and in the future. Where this has a significant impact on increasing the number of millennial and

Gen Z customers and also saves marketing costs.

This research is expected to be able to show a clear picture of how the use of micro-influencers in product marketing at this time and at the same time can be the first step for further research in the field of marketing communication strategies in the digital world through the internet and social media.

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