

Analysis of the Use of Instagram as a Publication Media in Building a Brand Image of @Kurve.official

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Abstract

Businesses are increasingly using Instagram as a publication tool to reach their target audience due to its rapid growth. Instagram's various features and benefits have made publishing even easier. However, because of the intense competition among businesses on this platform, brands must have a positive brand image in order to be chosen by the audience. @Kurve.official is an Indonesia-based online business that sells women's clothing and uses Instagram as their main social media platform. This research aims to analyze how @Kurve.official utilizes Instagram as their publication media in building the brand image. The main theory used in this research is a theory by Chris Heuer that talks about social media utilization 4C (context, communication, collaboration, and connection). The methodology is qualitative with a descriptive approach. The conclusion is the use of @Kurve.official Instagram in building its brand image is in line with the 4C theory which can be seen from the message, the communication that occurs, the collaboration between KURVE and its audience, and the efforts to maintain the established relationship with the audience. The suggestions given are to optimize the hashtag, content's concept, Instagram Live, and automatic message.

Keywords

4C chris heuer; brand image; Instagram; publication; social media



I. Introduction

Publication in Marketing Public Relations (MPR) is one of the seven main strategies used in marketing efforts. For instance, Kotler and Keller write in their publications that “businesses rely mainly on published material to reach and influence their target market. This includes annual reports, brochures, articles, company newsletters and magazines, and audiovisual materials” (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 630). The publication is one of the most significant MPR actions since it ensures that the brand's reputation continues to grow in the eyes of the general public.

Moreover, the role of the internet, which provides numerous conveniences in all aspects of human daily life, cannot be separated from this fact. Because of the widespread usage of smartphones and the internet, human activities seem to be contained within the palm and can be carried out completely digitally. Because of the convenience that smartphones provide, they have become a new social necessity. According to We Are Social data, it's proven that the number of smartphone devices connected to the internet in Indonesia in 2020 has reached 338.2 million devices (Kemp, 2020). Furthermore, one of the conveniences that can be seen is the communication process through social media. Watie (2011, p. 69) stated that “social media exists and changes the paradigm of communication in today's society. Communication is not limited by distance, time, and space. It can happen anywhere, anytime, without having to meet face to face”.

Communication is the process of delivering messages by someone to other people to tell, change attitudes, opinions or behavior either directly orally or indirectly through the media. In this communication requires a reciprocal relationship between the delivery of messages and recipients namely communicators and communicants (Hasbullah, et al: 2018).

Instagram is one of the most widely used social media platforms in the community since it provides a platform for users to exchange content in the form of images and videos. Instagram users can engage with one another by viewing, liking, and commenting on other users' posts (Instagram, n.d.). Although Instagram is known as a photo or video sharing service (photo sharing), Instagram can also be included as a social network because of the application features that allow users to interact with each other such as follow, like, comment, and mentions (Atmoko, 2012). A data from We Are Social, entitled Digital 2020: Indonesia, shows that Instagram is in the 4th position as the most widely used social media by the people in Indonesia with a total of 63 million users (Kemp, 2020).

Due to the large number of Instagram users, marketers are increasingly turning to this social media platform to reach their target audience. Facebook & Instagram SEA's Head of Emerging Business & SMBs, Ferdy Nandes, claims that the number of Instagram business accounts in Indonesia has surpassed 25 million. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Indonesia is among the top five countries with the greatest number of business accounts worldwide based on this data (Nabila, 2018). This figure is not surprising given that Instagram offers tools that might increase interaction and publication, such as likes, follows, tags, hashtags, comments, filters, stories, Q&A, surveys, direct messaging, insights, and others. As a consequence, brands can use it to capture the attention of their target audience. Ipsos data also confirms this, revealing that 90% of Instagram users surveyed said they had communicated with a business account. According to the same survey, an emerging business trend in Indonesia is prioritizing the use of Instagram as a business medium (Isaacson, 2018).

Due to Instagram focus that is specialized on visualizing photographs and videos, it is understandable that this business trend has arisen. This is especially true given Instagram's potential to become one of the most effective digital publication platforms for marketers. It is considered effective because, according to data from Socialbakers, despite the fact that Instagram is ranked lower than Facebook, the overall amount of interaction that occurs on Instagram is nearly 20 times greater. Consequently, even when the brand publishes more content on Facebook, the engagement with that content will fall short of the statistics attained by Instagram (Digital Information Worlds, in Rachmatunnisa, 2020). According to Kennedy (2016) Instagram is essential for business industries that rely on photo visualization, such as fashion, food, travel, design, and other similar fields of endeavor. When using social media as a publication tool, it is possible to present visually appealing content and provide information that keeps followers connected with the brand (Prabawati & Adi, 2019). Instagram as a publication media also facilitates the exchange of information between sellers and audiences because sellers can write product or service information in photo captions and buyers can ask further questions on the comments or direct message (DM) features.

Publication on Instagram is also suitable to be used by businesses that are just starting or developing their operations, ensuring that Instagram is not only used by big brands. This is because publishing on Instagram does not require large costs or a long period of time, which is the case with traditional publication media. According to the Ipsos survey (Isaacson, 2018), 63% of entrepreneurs under the age of 35 strongly agree that Instagram has been helpful in assisting them when created and developed their new

business. As a consequence, Instagram is considered a perfect medium, and its use in this current era has the ability to draw the attention of both businesses and individuals (Maryolein, Hapsari, & Oktaviani, 2019).

However, businesses face intense competition on Instagram, where anyone may promote things with similar designs and even at lower rates. As a result, businesses on Instagram are expected to regularly offer information about their brand's unique characteristics when producing contents to obtain the audience's attention and instill perceptions. Instagram content can convey a value or a brand attribute. These traits and values contribute to the indirect building of the brand image in the minds of the audience. Supported by Bevins Research results (in Lavoie, 2015) in 2014 entitled "Social Media's Role in Branding: A Study of Social Media Use and the Cultivation of Brand Affect, Trust, and Loyalty", explained that there is a correlation between the use of social media and the branding of a business. This brand image can later make the audience able to distinguish a brand from its competitors and influence purchasing decisions.

In using social media, there are 4C components according to Chris Heuer (in Solis, 2011, p. 263) which make its use easier and can achieve the previously planned goals. The 4Cs include:

a. Context: how to frame the story to be shared.

It is intended in terms of the choice of words for a message or story that is shared on social media so that the message can be received and digested properly. This can be judged by the words, language, and photos shared.

b. Communications: the practice of sharing stories as well as listening, responding and developing messages.

In this case, it means that the brand is not just sharing content on its social media accounts for publication purposes only, but also responding to messages from other audiences so that communication is carried out.

c. Collaboration: working together to make things better, more efficient, and effective.

It takes cooperation between brands and audiences in the use of social media so that messages can be conveyed better.

d. Connections: build and maintain existing relationships.

When communication has been established between the brand and its audience, the brand must be able to maintain this relationship properly.

@Kurve.official is a local brand that uses Instagram as a publication medium in shaping its image. Based on Instagram page, it can be seen that KURVE is an Indonesia-based online business venture that is engaged in fashion with a specialization in tank tops. KURVE also sells other women's clothing such as skirts, pants, bodysuits, shirts, and dresses. KURVE was started in August 2019 by PA and now has more than 70.000 Instagram followers. The features on Instagram are consistently used by @Kurve.official, such as live, story, repost, and uploads (KURVE, n.d.). The use of Instagram plays a very important role for KURVE's business considering that Instagram is the main social media for KURVE in publishing its products to the audience. KURVE started from home business and has now succeeded in having its own headquarter in the BSD area, Serpong. Apart from accepting transactions from within the country, KURVE has also served its customers who are abroad.

As discussed in previous sections, on Instagram, any business can sell products that are comparable to KURVE's, even at a more affordable price, and the number of competitors is growing all the time. As a result, even if KURVE has grown significantly as an online business based on Instagram, maintaining a positive image is essential since what distinguishes one brand from another is the perspective of the customer or the brand image.

Therefore, KURVE must be able to utilize Instagram as a publication medium to the greatest extent possible in order to establish a positive image that will encourage customers to engage with KURVE continuously.

From this explanation, the author is interested in analyzing @Kurve.official using Instagram as a publication medium in building a brand image using the theory of 4C social media utilization by Chris Heuer. The purpose of this research is to find out the use of Instagram @Kurve.official as a publication media in building brand image.

II. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research has descriptive characteristics, namely the data presented in the form of words or pictures and does not emphasize numbers. The other characteristics of qualitative research are it is carried out in natural conditions (as opposed to experiments), it is conducted directly with the data source and that the researcher is the primary instrument, it focuses more on the process than the product, it analyzes the data inductively, and it focuses on the meaning behind the observed data rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2016, p. 9-10).

The primary data collection technique used in this research is interviews, while the secondary data is through literature and internet studies. The type of interview conducted is semi-structured. The interviewees selected to be interviewed to make this research is more credible include: 2 internal interviewees from KURVE namely PA as the owner and RDN as the head of the creative team; 1 follower that engages in @Kurve.official's publication activity as an external interviewee named AI; and 1 expert, namely SE who works as a communication practitioner as well as a lecturer at a university. The presence of expert resource persons is also to support triangulation by data source in this study. The data analysis technique used is based on Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2016) and consists of 3 main activities, namely data reduction, data presentation, and verification.

III. Results and Discussion

From the results of the interviews, the following results and discussions were found using the theory of the use of social media 4C by Chris Heuer (Solis, 2011).

3.1 Context

The languages used by @Kurve.official in building its brand image are English and Indonesian. The use of language has been adapted to the target audience of KURVE. The purpose of using English is to reach KURVE's overseas audience. The use of English is widely found in the feeds and captions of the @Kurve.official Instagram page. It is the objective of KURVE to expand its foreign market and to handle a large number of international transactions, making it necessary to communicate in English as an international language so that the information is understandable to the target audience. However, Indonesian language is still used to support interactivity with the Indonesian audience because after all, KURVE is an Indonesia-based online business. Indonesian is used when submitting product reviews in the story and live features. Described by RDN:

“In building the KURVE’s brand image, we should get used to using English as much as possible because our target audience is also outside Indonesia, there are Philippines, Singapore, Aussie, and so on, so we just take the international language. But it is possible because we are based in Indonesia, so we have to use Indonesian several times

to support the existing content, for example, the interactivity in Story, we also use Indonesian several times...” (RDN, Personal Communication, March 20, 2021).

KURVE has its own team of content writers whose job is to structure the message on its website and build a brand image. Some frameworks and criteria must be considered by this team in building verbal captions. The outline is composed of a title or message header, body, and closing. The closing part can be an interactive sentence, persuasive, or a conclusion. The KURVE caption criteria, namely KURVE's mission of empowering women and self-confidence (confidence wear) can be conveyed in the caption. Captions are still product-adjusted on the visual content to maintain relevance. This is explained by PA:

“Of course, because our objective for KURVE's brand image is to empower, and more importantly, to inspire confidence in its wearers. Thus, the direction of the caption on Instagram is also included, ensuring that it is already tied.....” (PA, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021).

In strengthening its brand image, KURVE uses several key messages such as empowering and inspiring others, originality, uniqueness, and confidence. PA emphasized that the key message was directed to support confidence wear and extraordinary (PA, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021). Furthermore, RDN explained that key messages are always included in every upload on the KURVE's Instagram page and influencer contents. The intention is to convey the key messages repeatedly so it can be embedded in the minds of the audience. AI as a follower can recognize the key message @Kurve.official.

The process of making KURVE photos/videos is quite long before the content is finally uploaded on the Instagram page. In the process, the KURVE team prioritizes brainstorming so that the vision and mission contained in the campaign can be reflected in the concept of visual materials. First, PA as the owner of KURVE presented the campaign concept and its vision to the KURVE team. Subsequently, the creative team conducts concept development and content planning, whether it be in the form of photos, videos, or designs. The plan will be reviewed and approved by the PA to be uploaded on the @Kurve.official page. The KURVE creative team also provides an upload schedule in an effort to maintain upload consistency. KURVE implements a strategy in making its upload schedule, namely adjusting the upload time by evaluating insights into the @Kurve.official account. Thus, the message is expected to be delivered to many audiences at the right time.

There are several unique features of Instagram @Kurve.official in presenting its content. First, prioritizing product color transparency in published photos because considering the buyer side who wants to purchase a product that matches the online shop's image when shopping online. Second, displaying various body shapes in product photos so the audience can feel emotionally connected to the content and get an illustration of the product when it is being worn. In this case, KURVE utilizes its employees that have various body shapes to appear on their Instagram content. By doing this, hopefully the message of self-love and confidence can be conveyed in the brand image. Photos or videos uploaded by KURVE are deemed to have displayed aesthetic value and implemented the brand image that they want to achieve. In addition to maintaining the authenticity of the color of its products in the content and various body sizes, another unique thing is that KURVE also uses different photo and video campaign concepts for each collection that is launched depending on the purpose to be communicated. PA explains:

“.... Then in terms of content and photos, because each collection has its own uniqueness, it's really unique from there. So, since we're still on “Retro KURVE”, you can see it now, if you compare it with the feeds “This Is Me” yesterday, it's definitely very

different. Yesterday's "This Is Me" was more of a skin color concept, and Retro's was more of an old school, which has its own uniqueness" (PA, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021).

SE as an expert explains the importance of aesthetic value and uniqueness in packaging a brand's content because it acts as an added value in the eyes of the audience as well as perceiving the brand image. Transparency of product information must be maintained because it is inseparable from the customer's shopping experience. If there is a difference between customer expectations and photos/videos with the original product, whether in terms of color, clothing design, size, etc., it can affect the brand image (SE, Personal Communication, March 27, 2021).

Moreover, the KURVE's team considers that the role of hashtags on the Instagram page can be one of the branding methods in building brand image. KURVE uses specific hashtags such as #Kurvies, which is a nickname for KURVE audiences, and #Konfidencewear as @Kurve.official's branding. An additional hashtag is used depending on the name of the current campaign.

4.2 Communication

As a social media platform, Instagram contains tools that enable two-way communication, such as Direct Messages (DM) and comment sections. When responding to incoming messages from their Instagram followers, KURVE's social media admins present themselves as a friend and avoid using formal language. It's done to make the audience feels comfortable and not awkward when exchanging messages with KURVE. In addition, the admin does not have a planned answer because the responses will be replied according to the question. Audience messages are replied quickly because there are social media admins who are dedicated specifically for this task. It is also possible that PA as the owner sometimes also assists in replying the messages at @Kurve.official Instagram. According to SE, it is important to respond to the audiences who are potential buyers in a short time because it can represent the integrity and responsibility of the brand to its audience (SE, Personal Communication, March 27, 2021). AI confirms that KURVE replies to messages quickly, friendly, and uses emojis like a conversation with a friend.

The form of the message on @Kurve.official Instagram is to prioritize visuals because there is already a message to be communicated to the audience in the visual content presented. However, the verbal (caption) must remain relevant and support the visual so that the two can complement each other. SE (Personal Communication, March 27, 2021) emphasized that the role of visuals on Instagram is indeed very important and must be eye-catching, especially for KURVE as a business that sells clothes. Attractive product visuals will encourage the audience to stop at the content and process the information contained in the caption. Visual and verbal balance aims to optimize publications on Instagram in building an image.

The presentation of KURVE information on Instagram is always clear and up-to-date. This is done because KURVE started its business on Instagram, so it is not easy to lead the audience to other platforms to access information. Audiences still rely on searching for information on the @Kurve.official Instagram page. Clear information such as clothing sizes, new collections, promotions, and others are found on the KURVE Instagram page. KURVE products are usually reviewed by PA on Instagram stories. It is also presented in detail so that the message received by the audience remains clear and up to date.

In an effort to encourage feedback from the audience on Instagram, KURVE regularly communicates to its audience through the Instagram story and live features.

KURVE welcomes positive or negative feedback openly. When the feedback has been implemented, KURVE will reinform so that the audience feels heard by KURVE. This is explained by PA:

"Oh, it's clear because for example on Instagram, sometimes I mention it in Story, on Live I also mention it. Always, for example, when we are making improvements to the materials, I always mention this because it's based on your feedback. So, they feel involved, feel heard, feel included" (PA, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021).

KURVE also informs its WhatsApp number on the Instagram profile to give the audiences another option in giving feedback. Citing SE's explanation that clear information about the KURVE's communication channels can make it easier for the audience to obtain information (SE, Personal Communication, March 27, 2021). KURVE also uses interactive, persuasive sentences, and Instagram features to encourage its audience to give feedback on KURVE uploads.

4.3 Collaboration

Audience engagement on the KURVE Instagram account is still higher on Instagram stories than on feeds. This issue happens because the audiences are more active in watching Instagram stories. On the other side, Instagram feeds is easily pushed down by content from other accounts as feeds are no longer displayed according to the chronology of time. In both stories and feeds, audiences are engaged more intensely near the launch of new collections due to high enthusiasm, especially for long awaited products. In addition, contents with new visual concepts also tend to get more reach on KURVE's Instagram. Another upload that managed to get high insights and attract the audience's attention is the KURVE content that presents the product when it's worn by various body types because the audience feels that they get an illustration when they wear the product. This creates a sense of emotional relevance from the audience to KURVE's content and develops self-confidence.

All of KURVE's followers are organic. Therefore, the collaboration that occurs is audiences' interactions in the form of likes, shares, saves, and comments toward KURVE content on feeds. From the Insights obtained, KURVE can understand the audiences' preferences of Instagram content. If the insights are high, the concept becomes a reference guide for the creative team for the next upload. On the other hand, if the insights are low, the creative team will evaluate them with KURVE executives. In this case, another collaboration that occurs is the preference of KURVE audiences — who love to see attractive visuals and also the illustration when KURVE products are worn by various body shapes — make KURVE tries to fulfil the audience's preferences on @Kurve.official Instagram contents.

The following collaboration involves reposting or publishing KURVE customers' or influencers' content. @Kurve.official frequently re-uploads, either in stories or feeds, pictures of consumers wearing KURVE's items. For other audiences, this behavior can act as a testimonial. This allows KURVE's items to be presented on a considerably wider range of body shapes, which contributes significantly to the brand image of self confidence and self-love. By actively re-posting customer content, KURVE may reach new audiences and potential customers who are friends with existing customers. In this case, the customer has acted as a key opinion leader (KOL) for KURVE. RDN explains:

"That's very true. Like I said, sometimes we get customers even from your friends who tag us. Sometimes there are also comments, for example when you tag us, then I'll share your photo, later someone will capture your photo and send it back to us "Beb may I

know what size she is wearing and what model is she wearing?" That's why we think you guys are influencers for us" (RDN, Personal Communication, March 20, 2021).

Explained by SE, this reposting activity is a form of content amplification where the audience can give the exposure for the brand, so that KURVE can reach broader audience, not only on the @Kurve.official Instagram page but also on the customer's personal account page (SE, Personal Communication, March 27, 2021).

4.4 Connection

@Kurve.official implements several strategies to maintain the relationship that has been established with its audience. First, KURVE actively and consistently uploads content on Instagram to avoid losing contact because brands communicate with their audience through content. Consistent posts can make the audience feel emotionally connected and close to @Kurve.official which helps in building their brand image. Maintaining consistency and actively uploading is also emphasized by SE because through this, followers will be exposed to content uploaded by a brand continuously (SE, Personal Communication, March 27, 2021).

The next strategy to maintain closeness with the audience while increasing sales is to contact @Kurve.official followers personally via DM. This strategy is called as door-to-door strategy by KURVE's team. PA explains:

"Well, just like previously, I'm a door-to-door person and I'm not shy about saying hello to strangers. I don't know him but I can DM them... "Hello, did you get the KURVE package?" Or "did you just get it? I can recommend the size." Or even sending photos when I wear the clothes to convince them that if I look good, it means they're good too. Or sometimes there are customers who have lost contact but usually texting with me. I sometimes WA or DM them and like "Hello, how are you? Are you in a good health?" I can greet them and say, "Have you checked out the KURVE's feeds or story? We have just launched new items, don't miss it." It's like I'm more door-to-door, so they feel close to me" (PA, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021).

Another effort is to run programs that aim to appreciate the customer after the purchase (post-purchase services), such as the Kurvie of the Month program, changing clothes sizes, and returning products according to applicable terms and conditions. Kurvie of the Month is intended for loyal KURVE customers who often shop in large quantities and high frequency of giving reviews on their social media accounts. Through this program, customers are encouraged to give reviews (testimonials) for KURVE's products on their personal accounts. This program will select 1 person per month to be crowned as Miss KURVE and will be announced on Instagram @Kurve.official. As a Miss KURVE, she can enjoy various privileges, such as appearing on KURVE's Instagram content, having access to buy unreleased clothings, and more. According to PA, this program can be an KURVE's additional value in audience's perspective. It's because the Miss Kurve can also donate to the selected organization (PA, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021). It is hoped that by uploading Miss KURVE on her personal Instagram, this can help KURVE towards the brand image that we want to build.

To maintain closeness with the audience, RDN explained that "sharing is caring", therefore a lot of the daily content of PA's and KURVE team when wearing KURVE products are shared to reach out and get interaction from KURVE followers (RDN, Personal Communication, March 20, 2021). KURVE's activeness in uploading content makes AI as a follower feel relevant to the brand. It is because AI can see how KURVE products are worn by PA who has a body shape similar to hers. KURVE also often optimizes the Instagram Live feature to communicate real-time with the followers. In a live

session, KURVE's audience can express their opinions or questions to KURVE which will be answered openly and honestly by PA as the owner (PA, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021). SE stated that what the audience was looking for from a social media was a quick response and two-way communication (SE, Personal Communication, March 27, 2021).

IV. Conclusion

In accordance with the problem formulation of this study that is to determine the use of Instagram as a publication media in building the @Kurve.official brand image, judging from the 4C theory by Chris Heuer, these are the following conclusions that are obtained.

First, in the context element, namely the use of language, words, key messages, and photos by @Kurve.official, it is adjusted to the intended target audience and the image they want to perceive. Every visual content published has been conceptualized according to the vision embodied in the KURVE collection campaign. Different photo/video concept in each new KURVE's product launch campaign brings out its own uniqueness for the brand. This also supports KURVE's brand image through its well-delivered messages to followers. The suggestion that can be given to KURVE is to add visual concept of professional women in the feeds. This is meant to reach a wider audience reach while strengthening the brand image to empower women. In addition, adding more general hashtags in KURVE Instagram uploads is highly recommended to make the upload reaches more audiences.

In the aspect of communication, @Kurve.official's admin places herself as a friend in responding to messages so that the audience feels comfortable when communicating. Messages are also replied quickly and contextually. The form of KURVE's message on Instagram is to prioritize visuals but verbal is complementary to optimize the story-telling. To minimize the possibility of miscommunication, the information given must be clear and detailed all the time. The feedbacks that KURVE gets from its audience are always welcomed and appreciated. Communication on Instagram has helped @Kurve.official to convey the right message so that the brand image can be established. In order to make the audiences to get a fast reply, it is recommended to use the automatic reply message feature on @Kurve.official Instagram's DM especially when it is outside of KURVE's operating hours.

Several collaborations are formed between @Kurve.official's Instagram and their audiences to improve the use more effectively, and efficiently in building the brand image. It includes understanding the content preferences favored by the audience from insights, regular evaluations of uploaded content, and reposting customers' or influencers' uploads consistently. Finally on connection, to maintain the relationship that has been established, @Kurve.official has made some programs and efforts. The programs are to be consistent in uploading their Instagram content and not hesitate to contact the audience or buyers personally through DM. Some of the programs carried out by KURVE's to maintain relationships with its customers are by holding the Kurvie of the Month program, clothes alterations services, and product returns. In the future, it is recommended for KURVE to focus on increasing closeness with its audience on Instagram by optimizing the usage of Instagram Live during special events that gathers massive attention from audiences.

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