
DIGITAL ERA BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: HOW SKINCARE BRAND AMBASSADORS BOOST CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

Objective – The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of Jeon Somi in enhancing customer engagement on social media and how it impacts customer loyalty.

Design/Methodology/Approach – This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method with a literature review approach. Data were collected through observation of Jeon Somi's activities on social media, online data searches, and literature studies.

Findings – The results show that Jeon Somi successfully increased customer engagement through campaigns such as the #SnailDanceChallenge on TikTok, which garnered over 5.3 million views and an engagement rate of 7.3%. Additionally, Jeon Somi's Instagram account generated more than 150 thousand likes and positive comments, further enhancing customer engagement.

Conclusion and Implications – This study highlights the importance of using influencers in digital marketing strategies and how public figures like Jeon Somi can boost customer engagement, loyalty, and brand image.

Keywords: Brand Ambassador, Consumer Engagement, Brand Image, Brand Loyalty

INTRODUCTION

The increase in internet usage has become more prevalent with the support of information technology advancements that eliminate spatial and temporal boundaries. With just the internet, people can easily access the latest information from around the world. The widespread use of the internet has led many activities to transform into digital forms, one of which is marketing communication. One marketing approach used by brands to reach customers is utilizing digital technology such as social media. Instagram is one social media platform with a continually increasing number of users, which enables the development of online marketing campaigns. Supported by appealing visual formats like images and videos, hashtags for easier searching, and user-friendly applications at a relatively affordable cost, Instagram is increasingly favored for digital marketing communication.



The use of influencers in digital marketing strategies is also commonly employed to enhance social media marketing. The term influencer comes from English, meaning someone who has influence or can influence. According to Oktavia (2020) in Pradika (2022), influencers are those from the entertainment industry or celebrities with fans or followers on social media. Companies or brands use influencers as intermediaries to convey messages to their target consumers. These influencers act as consumers or buyers of a brand, having the ability to share positive aspects of the brand, thus increasing product sales.

As digital marketing communication strategies develop, new ideas and innovations from companies seeking to maintain their position in capturing consumer attention and dominating the global market emerge, one of which is through global brand ambassadors. The use of brand ambassadors by well-known brands is an effort to attract public interest and build brand image with representatives such as celebrities to leave a strong impression on consumers. According to Lea-Greenwood in Budiman (2018), a brand ambassador is a means used by a brand to deliver messages to the public with the aim of increasing sales. The selection of brand ambassadors usually involves famous celebrities with the expectation of a positive impact on the company.

The use of brand ambassadors is applied by X, a well-known Korean skincare brand popular in Indonesia. In its promotion process, X introduced Jeon Somi, a South Korean global brand ambassador. X announced Jeon Somi as their global brand ambassador in March 2022. She is a K-Pop soloist known in Indonesia for her positive and energetic aura and healthy skin, expected to create a good impression on Indonesian consumers. Jeon Somi stated that her reason for accepting the brand ambassador offer from X was her positive experience using X's products, which effectively addressed her skin issues. The presence of Jeon Somi as a brand ambassador has specific goals; X hopes this advertising or promotional activity will enhance consumer engagement on social media, resulting in consumer loyalty. Consumer loyalty can be defined as the tendency of consumers to repeatedly purchase a company's goods or services. According to Tjiptono (2004), consumer loyalty is customer loyalty to a brand, store, or supplier based on very beneficial quality proven through long-term purchases.

According to Tripathi (2009) in Rohadian and Amir (2019), developing, maintaining, and protecting consumer relationships to ensure they continue their association with the company is known as customer engagement. Thus, customers are not only buyers but also become marketers for the company. From this phenomenon, the researcher wants to understand how X's promotional or campaign activities using a brand ambassador enhance customer engagement through social media.

Digital Marketing Communication

According to Nursatyo and Rosliani (2018), digital marketing communication is a strategy that uses digital media or the internet to promote a brand or product. This strategy reaches customers through various digital platforms to showcase the advantages and uniqueness of the offered products or services. According to Kesnadji (2016) in Octavia and Sari (2018), marketing communication is a type of communication aimed at enhancing marketing strategies to achieve broader consumer segmentation. Additionally, marketing communication is designed to introduce, establish, and create relationships between a company and business partners or to communicate the company's products and services to consumers.

Brand Ambassador

Fasha, Robi, and Windasari (2022) state that a brand ambassador is an effort by companies to use celebrities as a means to market the brand image and increase the sales of a product. A celebrity contracted as a brand ambassador will act as a spokesperson for the brand. According to Primolassa and Soebiantoro (2022), brand ambassadors are used to build a brand's image, supported by selecting artists or celebrities whose vision, mission, values, and commitment align with the company. Sari Dewi (2020) in Ar-Rasyi (2024) notes that companies can use brand ambassadors to interact with consumers and boost sales. This is evidenced by research showing that brand ambassadors influence buyer choices, meaning companies can generate more revenue.

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement occurs when customers have the opportunity to voluntarily contribute to a company's brand. This contribution is not limited to the purchasing process (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014 in Hidayat and Nuzil 2023). According to Sulistiyono and Purwanti (2023), in a holistic definition, customer engagement encompasses overall customer activity as a way to add value to the company, both directly and indirectly. Research results indicate that customer engagement is a concept with many dimensions that can impact company performance.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach. According to Sugiyono (2018) in Hibatullah (2021), qualitative research is a method based on philosophical foundations used to investigate scientific situations (experiments). Researchers act as instruments, using data collection methods and performing qualitative analysis that emphasizes meaning. Meanwhile, Moleong (2012) in Budiman (2018) describes qualitative research as a type of research aimed at gaining a better understanding of phenomena observed by research subjects, such as their behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions as a whole. Qualitative research is conducted using various scientific methods and in natural settings.

In this study, the author uses a descriptive qualitative research type to obtain detailed and in-depth results regarding the role of brand ambassadors in building consumer loyalty. According to Arikunto (1992) in Farida (2017), descriptive qualitative research is conducted when researchers want to understand a status or similar aspects, explaining events in a descriptive manner.

The author employs a case study research method for this study. According to Maxfield in Budiman (2018), case studies generally involve research subjects such as individuals, groups, institutions, or communities. A case study is research focused on the status of a subject related to a specific or unique phase of personality.

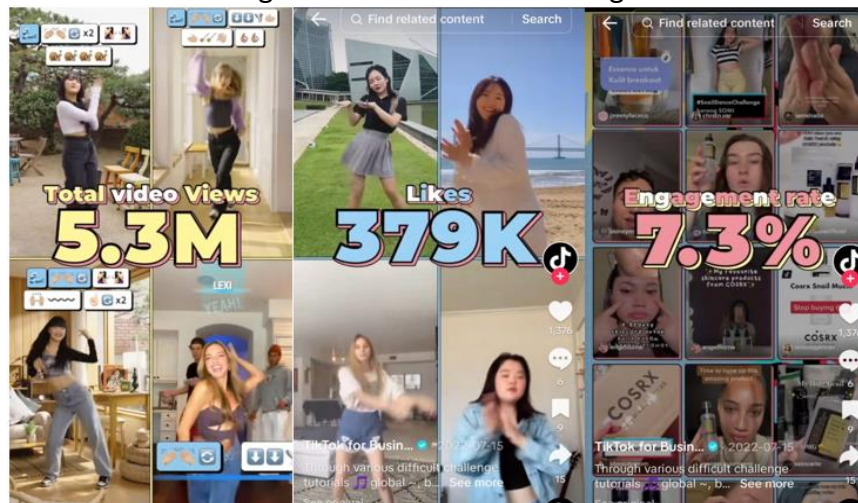
The author collects data using observation, literature study, and online data searches. Observation is conducted on X's and Jeon Somi's social media activities to understand business communication and consumer reactions. Literature study involves reviewing literature related to the role of brand ambassadors in business communication and digital marketing. Online data searches include information from X's official website, news articles, blogs, and consumer discussion forums to gain additional insights into consumer perceptions of Jeon Somi and her impact on consumer loyalty. The research subjects are X's consumers active on social media, while the objects are Jeon Somi's role as a brand ambassador and her influence on consumer engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To introduce its new brand ambassador, X held a fan meet with #TemanX in Indonesia, featuring Jeon Somi in person. During this fan meet, Jeon Somi shared various tips and tricks on skincare selection that she has applied. With her positive aura, energetic presence, and glowing skin, Jeon Somi was able to gain the audience's trust regarding effective skincare choices. Jeon Somi also mentioned that X's products have effectively helped her address her skin issues.

In efforts to enhance customer engagement on social media, research by Rohadian and Amir (2019) identifies several strategies, including Content Engagement, Media Engagement, Engagement Marketing Activities, using casual and friendly language, and utilizing social media features. These strategies can serve as primary guidelines for increasing consumer engagement and boosting customer loyalty.

Figure 1. Snail Dance Challenge



Source: @tiktokforbusinesskorea on tiktok, 2022

X leveraged Jeon Somi's talent as a brand ambassador—specifically her dancing skills—to enhance customer engagement on social media. X launched a campaign on TikTok titled the Snail Dance Challenge. This campaign involved inviting the audience to join a dance challenge with Jeon Somi, where participants created duet videos and uploaded them on TikTok using the hashtag #SnailDanceChallenge. Users with the most likes and the best concept would win X's latest product, a serum containing snail mucin. The campaign successfully attracted interest, especially from Jeon Somi's fans. Evidence of this success includes the #SnailDanceChallenge achieving over 5.3 million video views, 379,000 likes, and an engagement rate of 7.3%. Through this campaign, consumers not only became buyers but also indirectly participated in promoting the snail mucin serum on social media.

Figure 1. Jeon Somi Instagram Promotion



Source: @somsomi0309 di instagram, 2023

On other social media platforms, Jeon Somi has frequently promoted X's products on her personal Instagram account. These promotional posts feature photos of X's products and videos showing Jeon Somi using the promoted products. In these posts, Jeon Somi uses brief captions in Korean about the product's name, ingredients, benefits, and her feelings after using the product. According to Budiman (2018), a brand ambassador can act as a liaison between the company and its consumers, ensuring that messages are communicated more effectively. Each of Jeon Somi's promotional posts received over 150,000 likes and numerous comments, with consumers noting that their choice to use X's products was influenced by Jeon Somi's endorsement. In contrast, X's official Instagram account, which features promotional posts for the same products endorsed by Jeon Somi, received less than 5,000 likes in total. This demonstrates that having Jeon Somi as a brand ambassador can significantly enhance consumer engagement, as evidenced by the higher number of likes on social media, leading to greater attention and potentially increased consumer loyalty for X.

Oktavia (2020) in Pradika (2022) discusses the theory related to the use of influencers or celebrities in digital marketing strategies, stating that those with many fans and followers on social media can influence consumer purchasing decisions. In this case, Jeon Somi, as X's brand ambassador, has had a positive impact on X's social media campaigns by significantly increasing consumer engagement.

CONCLUSION

In the digital era, the transformation of business communication has significantly changed how businesses interact with their customers. X, a well-known skincare brand from South Korea, has leveraged this technological advancement by partnering with Jeon Somi as their brand ambassador to strengthen their digital marketing strategy. Jeon Somi, with her high popularity and positive image, has effectively captured the audience's attention and conveyed the brand's message. This is evident from the substantial interactions and responses received from the campaigns conducted.

X successfully attracted consumers through campaigns like the #SnailDanceChallenge on TikTok. This campaign encouraged the audience to actively participate by creating duet videos with Jeon Somi, thereby increasing product visibility and enhancing customer loyalty. The high number

of views, likes, and engagement of this campaign indicates that selecting the right brand ambassador can significantly influence customer purchasing decisions and build a more loyal community.

Additionally, product promotions on Jeon Somi's personal Instagram account have had a positive impact. Unlike X's official account, posts featuring Jeon Somi using X's products received more likes and comments than posts showcasing the product's usage. This suggests that customers are more influenced by endorsements from public figures they admire. This success highlights the importance of choosing a brand ambassador who has a strong connection with the target audience and the ability to deliver the brand's message in an authentic and engaging manner.

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