THE ROLE OF UNPERBA' SOCIAL MEDIA AS A DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY ON THE INTEREST OF STUDENTS' ENROLLMENT

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Abstract: The Role of UNPERBA's Social Media As A Digital Marketing Strategy on The Interest Of Students' Enrollment. The aim of this study is to examine the role of Universitas Perwira Purbalingga's social media as a digital marketing strategy on the interest of students' enrollment at Universitas Perwira Purbalingga (UNPERBA). The qualitative method approach was implemented in this study by applying one on one interview with UNPERBA current students as the participants. The data was collected and interpreted verbatim with the number of participants was determined by the saturation. The result showed that UNPERBA's social media is playing an important role for the potential students to seek detail information about UNPERBA before choosing to enroll. Thus, the participants give recommendation that UNPERBA need to post more about the students' activities and Study Program activities to increase the interest of students' enrollment.

Key Words: Social Media, Digital Marketing Strategy, Consumer's Purchase Decision, Students' Enrollment

INTRODUCTION

The rising of social media usage as one of digital marketing platforms has become a key of building social signals. These social signals play the important pillar of digital marketing campaign especially on Search Engine Optimization or known as SEO. Social media which integrated with SEO will be an effective tool in building a website organic traffic. As societies currently using social media not only for branding their personal and interpersonal but also for finding products or services they need and want. Thus, the social media became a trend among marketers as one of digital marketing platforms to grow their social signals, monitoring word of mouth, boost their product sales, as well as rising their brand awareness and image. (Bowden, 2014; Moustakas, 2015; Henderson, 2020)

The social media marketing is related to the consumer's buying decision process as part of consumer behavior. It is because the social media serve any information that society can access publicly (Moustakas, 2015). Mikalef and others (2013) and Shen, Li and DeMoss (2012) which stated that social media or communication means makes it easier for every user to share any information which impacts the spread of product information.

The social media marketing can be leveraged not only for industrial branding, but also for educational branding. School at

any level has adopted social media marketing to promote their campus. In Indonesia for example, Universitas Perwira Purbalingga (UNPERBA) has several social media accounts such as website, instagram, facebook, and youtube, and has been continuously update their social media contents to promote the campus as well as to gain more interest from potential students to make an enrollment. However, UNPERBA continues to face a declining in students' enrollment for the past 2 years (2020-2021). Therefore, researcher proposes this study to help UNPERBA examines their social media role in students' enrollment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

On 2014, Bowden (2014) write down an article on SocialMediaToday website, stated that the surveys on the consumers spending their time on social media channel such as Facebook and Twitter around 37 minutes per day, and 10% of the internet users are spent on social media sites. Bowden (2014) also emphasizes that in 2013, around 53% digital marketers are already positioning their brand through social media channels, and by 2014 this social media marketing is continue to rise.

Email marketing as part of the social media platforms also plays the important role in integrating social media marketing. By using social media with the main email

registration, it will be easier to make an advertisement based on their current and frequent surfing on the internet. It also makes it easier to make a purchase or decision if potential buyers see particular brand within their friends' social feeds, since the brand stays on top in people's mind. (Bowden, 2014; Henderson, 2020)

Henderson on digitalmarketing website stated that the advantages of social media marketing other than that it can reach wider market and grow customers with minimum budget; it also can see the customers' buying patterns and consumer buying proceess as part of consumer behavior, as well as increase the overall Return of Investment or known as ROI. By knowing the customers' buying pattern, the company has more information about what their customers or potential customers' likes dislikes, interest, frequent searching and frequent buying. Those help the company to create content that can be relatable for their audience, and increasing engagement on their social media presence. On the other hand, social media marketing can increase the overall ROI since the cost of social media utilization is considered cheap and some offer free. Thus, gives the company more revenue. (Henderson, 2020)

Besides those mention above, the other advantages of using social media as one of digital marketing platforms to do marketing

activity are that it can help the company to build customer relationship with the target customers, and increase the brand awareness. Social media give the customers and potential customers to see the company or business on much deeper level (Moustakas, 2015; Henderson, 2020).

The social media marketing is related to the consumer's buying decision process (Henderson, 2020) as part of consumer behavior. Consumer behaviour is the study of how people make decisions about what they purchase in order to satisfy their needs and wants. The behaviour can be pre-purchase and post-purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2011). Meanwhile, buyer behavior is a process which through inputs and their use though process and actions leads to satisfaction of needs and wants (Enis, 1974). Otherwise, Kumar (2010) defines the consumer buying behaviour "is refers to the buying behaviour of final consumers, both individuals and households, who buy goods and services for personal consumption". Alternatively, Schiffman et al., (2007) defines the buying behavior is "he behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs".

The five (5) stages in consumer's buying decision process by Kotler & Armstrong (2018) are: Problem recognition (1st stage),

Seeking Information (2nd stage), Evaluation of alternatives (3rd stage), Purchase decision (4th stage), and post-purchase behavior (5th stage). The buyer can use all five stages during decision making process towards a product. Perhaps, the buyer can also skip the one or more stages, it's all depends on consumer mind (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Since everything about the business is posted realtime in social media, the potential customers' as well as recent customers can see what other customers say about your business. The growing of word of mouth through social media may give big impact to your business reputation as well as the consumer's purchase decision (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015; Adi et al., 2017; Kotler and Armstrong, 2018).

Based on the literatures review, the utilization of social media as one of digital marketing platforms for gaining interests from potential students and their parents to make an enrollment is consider a necessity today. Social media such as website, facebook, youtube, twitter, instagram, tiktok, today are more than just for fun. Those can help promoting the school to society as well as school branding (Agusampurno, 2017).

Agusampurno (2017) on gurukreatif blog wrote down that there are two dimensions that need to be put on a social

media as a school branding. First, the school are expected to regularly post any kind of activities that the current students or school involved in, such sport activity, art activity, competitions, religious activity, etc. The second dimension is that school is expected to actively and continously create positives content about the school to increase their reputation and school brand (Agusampurno, 2017). Researcher believe that UNPERBA is aware of school branding by looking at their consistency to update their social media content such as their instagram , in order to make a positioning as a number one campus in Purbalingga in the societies' minds.

However, UNPERBA is consistently faced declining in students' enrollment which UNPERBA faced in the past couple of years (2020 – 2021). In 2019, UNPERBA secceed to make 260 students made an enrollment at UNPERBA. Meanwhile, in 2020, only 176 students made an enrollment at UNPERBA. Then, in 2021 UNPERBA faced decreasing again on students' enrollment, which only 102 students in total (UNPERBA internal Database, 2022). Despite of UNPERBA concistency to update their social media content in order to give more information about UNPERBA and gaining more interest from potential students, this declinement in students' enrollment which UNPERBA faced in the

past couple of years (2020 – 2021) has become a concern. Thus, researcher proposes this study.

Conceptual Framework

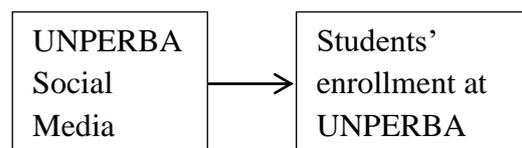The conceptual framework for this study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study applied qualitative method approach and follows the philosophy of interpretivism since the researcher focus on specific topic, and wants to study the phenomena in natural setting with no disruption as possible, as well as gain the knowledge based on the topic being studied (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). The qualitative method approach allows researcher to gain deeper information about the actual situation through participants' minds by interviewing them (Creswell, 2009).

One on one and semi structured interview was employed in this study. Researcher involved directly in the study and used small number of participants of UNPERBA current students. The current students was chosen as participants because researcher wants to have a clear information

regarding the role of UNPERBA's social media on their interest in enrolling as UNPERBA's students back then. The numbers of participants were determined by the data saturation. The data collection stopped once no further information is received through the interview and it has comes to seven (7) participants in total. The audio interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using ATLAS.ti.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The theory of consumer's purchase decision by Kotler & (2017) is related to this study, but only the context is different. The contexts of consumer's purchase decision which Kotler and Keller (2016) mentioned are for buying a product or utilize the services, hence in this study means the student's enrollment. So, for the purpose of this study and to equate the perception, the researcher prefers to use the term of student's enrollment rather than consumer's purchase decision.

There are five (5) stages of consumer buying decision process by Kotler & Armstrong (2018). This process initiates with the problem recognition (1st stage), which means that the potential consumer must know what they need and want. Then, the consumer will seek the information (2nd stage) releated to the need and want. After that, the potential consumer will evaluate the alternatives (3rd stage) from the obtained information. Then, the consumer will decide which the product that suit the best of their need and want, and then buying the product or utilizing the services (4th stage). Finally, after buying the product and get the experiences, the consumer will evaluate and give a feedback or behavior about their post-purchase (5th stage) (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Nevertheless, this study emphasizes and examines at 2nd to 4th stages as for the purposes of this study is to find the role of UNPERBA's social media as a digital marketing strategy on the interest of students' enrollment at UNPERBA.

Those stages show how a consumer starts with thinks and seeks the related informations (2nd stage) before they buy a product or use the services. Some literatures also agreed that the consumer seeks the information of the product when they want to try new product. The consumer begins search about the product in this stage through several source includes personal sourches such as family and friends, commercial sources such as advertising and websites, public sources such as mass media and social media, and experimental sources such as examining and using the products (Clow & Back, 2016; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). It is in line with the students' enrollment at UNPERBA. Before the potential student decides to make an

enrollmentin UNPERBA, they all seek the related information first before finding themselves in interest to make an enrollment. All the Participants explained that they all seek the information about UNPERBA in detail after hearing the name of UNPERBA from family (P5, P6), friends (P1, P2), acquaintance (P7), and brosur (P3, P4). Some seeks the information in detail by contacting the Whatsapp of UNPERBA Call Center which they got from UNPERBA's Instagram pages (P2,P4), others were seeking informations in detail by surfing on Instagram (P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7), else were also from youtube (P1,P4), and one also from facebook (P1).

After seeking the detail information about UNPERBA, the potential students begin to find the alternative of universities (3rd stage), and then have an interest and decided to enroll at UNPERBA (4th stage). Some students said their interest for enrolling in UNPERBA was because of the scholarship advertising posted in UNPERBA's social media (P2,P3,P5), others was because UNPERBA is the only campus that near their houses (P1,P2,P4,P5,P7), so there is no need to find a condominium to stay and save the money on food since they can just eat at their houses. This is in line with the literatures that is when a consumer have successfully gathering the information of a product or a

brand, then the consumer ranks the product or brand, and then next step is evaluate it. After that, the consumer will decide which product to buy after gathering information from several sources, evaluate them, and then decide for the where and what to purchase. The consumers will likely to have interest and purchase the product or brand which can fulfill their needs and wants, as well as can give more benefit to them. It means that the product or brand gives the highest rank in the evaluation stage. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Qazzafi, 2019)

From the interviews analysis above, it can be seen that the most preference of UNPERBA's social media which the potential students' have chosen to gathering information in detail about UNPERBA was Instagram. The second preference of gathering information in detail about UNPERBA was Whatsapp and youtube. Then, the least preference was UNPERBA's facebook page.

There was a question in interviews which the researcher asked to the participants "Have you ever seen an advertisement about UNPERBA appear in the middle of your activities surfing your social media?" This question was to know whether UNPERBA is at their best to promote the UNPERBA at social media and utilize digital marketing optimally and integrated its social media to the SEO.

Based on the interview analysis, all the participants have same answers that they have never seen UNPERBA's advertisement in the middle of their activity surfing in their social media accounts. It means that UNPERBA's social media have not been optimally using digital marketing through social media and have not been integrated its social media to the SEO. Whereas, Bowden (2014) and Henderson (2020) agreed that there are some important things that are need to be implemented in the business, so that the social media is at its maximum utilization for marketing activity. Those are, integrating social media to the SEO; identify the target consumer behavior which in this study is a potential student by using SEO analythics; and optimizing the landing pages of the business website by combining social media and SEO. Whereas, Henderson (2020) agreed that the advantages of social media marketing are that it can reach wider market and grow customers with minimum budget. In addition, social media marketing can help the company to build customer relationship with the target customers, and increase the brand awareness (Moustakas, 2015).

Universitas Perwira Purbalingga (UNPERBA) is the only university in Purbalingga until 2020. In 2021, there is a new university established near UNPERBA called Institut of Technology and Business Muhammadiyah Purbalingga (ITBMP) (Observation, 2022). This ITBMP become the nearest and closest competitor of UNPERBA. The emerging of this competitor might be the reason of UNPERBA faced decreasing students' enrollment on the past 2 years. Since, the society or potential students have more alternative options to be evaluated before choosing the university.

Therefore, UNPERBA is forced to be more active and attractive to advertise the campus to the society, either by doing presentation directly to the potential students, or by utilizing social media advertising to reach wider market and have fewer budgets. From the participants' perspectives, all participants give recommendation that UNPERBA need to post more about the students' activities such as Students Association (HIMA), Students Executive Board (BEM), dan Students Activity Units (UKM) (P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7) in UNPERBA's social media such as instagram and youtube. There was a participant (P7) who added that eventhought UNPERBA sometimes reposted students' activities, yet UNPERBA do not have their own particular post about their students' activities. Therefore, it lacks of detail information of students' activities as well as the activities of each Study Program. Others recommended that

UNPERBA also need to post their activities related to Study Program so that the potential student who wants to enroll in particular Study Program will have more interest to enroll.

CONCLUSSION

The role of UNPERBA's social media is playing an important role to the interest of students' enrollment. The potential students prefer to seek detail information about UNPERBA through UNPERBA's social media before choosing to enroll. Therefore, the participants recommended that UNPERBA need to post more about the students' activities and Study Program activities to increase the interest of students' enrollment. As well as integrating UNPERBA's social media to the SEO so that UNPERBA may grow their social signals, monitoring word of mouth, boost the UNPERBA promotion and sales, and rising the UNPERBA's brand awareness and image.

The researcher recommends that for further study, the next research may use potential students as participants to seek more information regarding the role of social media in their interest of enrollment at university.

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