

Application of Emphatic Marketing Strategy at Burger King Company on Social Media Against Customer Engagement During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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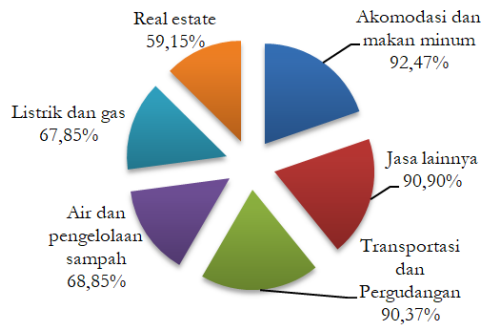
ABSTRACT. The COVID-19 pandemic that has been going on since the beginning of 2020 has had a tremendous impact on all business sectors. Several sectors experienced a decline, not even a few went bankrupt. One of the companies that managed to survive in the midst of a pandemic is Burger King. By utilizing social media accounts, Burger King is able to optimally implement empathic marketing strategies so as to increase customer engagement. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a phenomenological approach. This research method will focus on studying and explaining the phenomenon of the marketing strategy used by Burger King during the COVID-19 pandemic. The object of this research is on Burger King's social media pages, namely Instagram (@burgerking.id) and Facebook (Burger King Indonesia). The image post containing the marketing strategy was uploaded on November 3, 2020 or when the COVID-19 pandemic was taking place in Indonesia. One of the latest marketing strategies is to create exclamation content as well as invitations to be uploaded on their official social media which contains an invitation to Burger King to its customers to buy products from various other restaurants, including its competitors, namely McDonald's and KFC. Burger King also recommends its customers to buy from several other fast food/restaurants such as Pizza Hut, Wendy's, Hokben, J.Co, RM Padang Simple, to Warteg. This marketing strategy generates a lot of empathy and respect from netizens to help and invite each other in terms of buying products from the fast food.

Keywords: burger king, pandemic, empathic marketing, social media, customer engagemen

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a developing country which is famous for the friendliness of its people. Besides being famous for its hospitality, Indonesia is also one of the target markets in marketing potential products, both local and international product marketing. Indonesian consumers have unique characteristics and characteristics compared to consumers from other countries. This character is empathy in buying and selling activities. Even though the level of socio-economic inequality is high, the Indonesian people still have a caring nature for others so they tend to have the will to empathize with those in need. According to Pfeil & Zaphiris (2007) who put forward the key definition of empathy, namely: being able to feel what other people feel, knowing what others are feeling, and being able to respond to what is difficult for others. Thus it can be concluded that empathy is a state or feeling that exists in a person when faced with certain situations so that a sense of caring and needing help for people in need arises.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, it has had a tremendous impact on all business sectors. Several sectors experienced a decline, not even a few went bankrupt. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) report on the Covid-19 Impact Survey on business actors conducted in the period 10-26 July 2020, revealed that the majority of micro and small enterprises (UMK) and medium and large enterprises (UMB) reported a decline in income in their business, respectively 84.20% for MSEs and 82.29% for MSEs. Meanwhile, the three business sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are the accommodation and food and beverage sector by 92.47%, 90.34% for the transportation and warehousing sector by 90.34% and other services by 90.90%. The impact of the pandemic also affects changes in the number of employees and the percentage reduction in the number of employees is relatively more common in medium and large businesses up to 46.64% (Statistics, 2020).



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (2020)

Figure 1. Business Sector During a Pandemic

The deteriorating condition of business actors, especially the accommodation and food and beverage sector due to the pandemic, several companies implemented a number of business adaptations during the pandemic. Business diversification includes efforts to carry out business processes as usual but there are additional products, business fields and locations, marketing or marketing to increase revenue. The application of regional restrictions also affects product sales and forces companies to do marketing via online. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that companies that were already doing online marketing before the pandemic had 1.14 times higher income than those that were online during the pandemic.

With the difficulty of selling products during the pandemic, coupled with the existence of community social restrictions, forcing some companies to create new marketing strategies to survive. One of the companies that managed to survive in the midst of this pandemic is Burger

King. Burger King Corporation is a restaurant industry with the type of fast food company in the first burger specialist which was founded in Miami, Florida, United States in 1945 by James McLamora and David Enjector. And now Burger King has spread to almost 64 countries including Indonesia.

In achieving the success of a business, especially during this pandemic, marketing strategies are very important. According to Gugup (2011), the company has the main function in carrying out a marketing strategy, namely to analyze and select the intended target market, develop a marketing mix to maintain and satisfy consumer needs. Determination of marketing strategies in uncertain conditions such as today must be based on an analysis of the company's external and internal environment as well as an analysis of opportunities or opportunities and threats faced by the company from its environment. A good marketing strategy according to Suyanto (2007) must be able to change its marketing focus from customers or products back to customers. The strategy is influenced by several external environmental factors such as those concerning competition, government policies and regulations including macro and micro economics, socio-culture, demography, law, politics and technology.

The existence of social media today has penetrated into human life. In its development, social media is used as a place to make friends, campaign for certain programs (education, social, health and so on), to a place to promote and market certain products or services. Everyone through social media can create, edit and publish their own news content, promotions, articles, photos and videos. So that it is more flexible, fast and broad in scope, as well as more effective and efficient. Business people must be able to take the right steps to switch to online marketing. The implementation of these strategies must be carried out optimally in order to increase customer engagement or increase people's purchasing power. According to statistical data, social media users in Indonesia until 2021 have more than 150 million people out of a total 270.20 million population (Statistics, 2020). And at least the Indonesian people in a day can spend 3 hours 26 minutes to access social media for any purpose.

In the midst of a pandemic like today where people are encouraged to stay at home or stay at home and avoid crowds, social media is thus one of the best ways to promote products. Many SMEs and business actors in Indonesia are currently helping each other. Starting to be active in providing promos, to solidarity to promote each other's business. Companies in this case can use various approaches depending on the situation that develops in society. Burgerking is one of the business actors who implement this through its marketing strategy, although with a different marketing approach.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a phenomenological approach. Data collection uses the literature review method derived from related books or journals, previous research, and websites of certain organizations/companies. Moelong (2002) explains as a theoretical basis in understanding the qualitative method approach as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. With this descriptive method, the report presented contains excerpts of data to provide an overview of the presentation of the report. So with this research method, researchers will focus on studying and explaining the phenomenon of the marketing strategy used by Burger King during the COVID-19 pandemic on its social media. The object of this research is on Burger King's social media pages, namely Instagram (@burgerking.id) and Facebook (Burger King Indonesia). The

image post containing the marketing strategy was uploaded on November 3, 2020 or when the covid-19 pandemic was taking place in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social media

Today, the rapid development of social media in Indonesia causes marketers to start shifting their marketing strategies in order to be able to reach a wider, accurate and efficient target audience without being hampered by certain time and location constraints. By utilizing social media marketing, companies can monitor, connect and maintain relationships with customers, consumers, and business partners owned by the company. The most popular social media in Indonesia and have millions of users are Facebook and Instagram. The existence of social media allows users to communicate with millions of other users (Gulati & Williams, 2013).

One of the marketing communication tools that has great potential and opportunity to reach customers is social media. In addition, to facilitate the sharing of information between other users. The use of social media for marketers is to be able to carry out marketing communications anytime and anywhere, always on and everywhere, because apart from being accessed via a computer, it can also be accessed via mobile/smart phones. In addition, the benefits of social media for business actors include being able to easily explain product specifications, quality, prices, and consumers can be more flexible in choosing the goods needed according to their abilities (Praditya, 2019).

Burgerking is one of the companies that take advantage of the rapid development of social media in Indonesia as a promotional tool. Various content, be it marketing or product advertising, are displayed to accommodate online sales and purchases. Burger King Indonesia's Instagram account is (@burgerking.id) which until 2021 the number of Instagram followers has reached 1.4 million, and its Facebook account (Burger King Indonesia) has been liked by 827,851 people. Of the many followers, of course Burger King uses it for their business marketing media where social media is one of the most widely used platforms in Indonesia.

One of the newest marketing strategies is to create exclamation content as well as invitations that were uploaded during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. In this upload, Burger King's official social media account invites and asks customers to buy products other than Burger King's own products, namely an invitation to buy competitor products such as McDonal's, KFC, Pizza Hut, to warteg. The day after the post was uploaded, the public's interest in the message conveyed was very high. The upload on November 3, 2020 until now (January 29, 2021) has been liked by 349 thousand and 13.3 thousand comments on their Instagram account and 13,500 likes, 1,800 comments and 8,600 shares on their Facebook account.

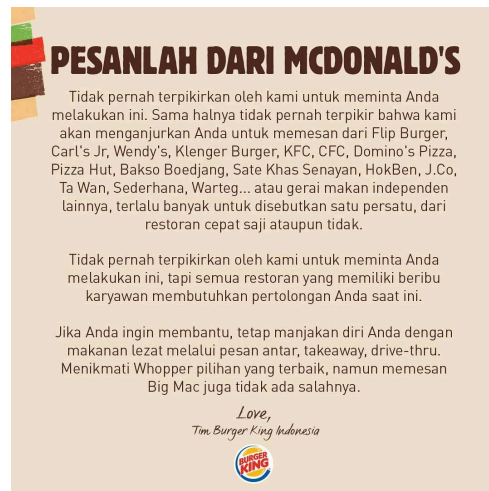
Emphatic Marketing Strategy

Empathy plays an important role in the advertising world because this behavior can make a consumer imagine a sense of being a character in an advertisement, so that it can create an emotional bond between a consumer and the advertisement (Rawal & Saavedra Torres, 2017). In a narrower context, modern marketing science explains that customer emotion is a mandatory thing that must be done when implementing a marketing strategy. Therefore, empathy is one way that can be used to increase engagement, so that customers will take some advocating actions for the ad to others to disseminate it with the aim of giving a wider impact.

The main purpose of empathic marketing is to attract customers or people to buy fast food during this Covid-19 pandemic. At a time of pandemic like this, the empathic society is indeed on the rise, where people are helping each other to survive. This is also confirmed in research conducted by Christie (2020) through MarketingDive which explains that 56% of customers will choose products that have empathy for consumers in difficult times, which in this case is the Covid-19 pandemic. The study also explained that there was a change in consumer behavior, such as almost half (49%) of consumers choosing not to eat out of the home, while the remaining 27% of consumers ordered food delivery or take-away. And about 44% of consumers are not comfortable going out of the house during a pandemic and another 37% they buy goods or food online.

Various kinds of problems in the midst of the current pandemic are not only faced by companies but also consumers. So there needs to be adjustments that must be made because the attractiveness of the business has stalled, income has dropped, but operations are still running. Concerns about layoffs and the worst condition, the company could close because it is not ready to face and avoid the crisis caused by this pandemic. Many industries are also out of business due to not being able to adapt and not adapting enough to the situation. Therefore, the company's strategy in attracting empathy to its consumers can be a strategic step in proving and at the same time as a stepping stone to strengthen and increase purchasing power.

Burgerking is said to be able to read opportunities during a pandemic and then at the same time be adopted as part of its marketing on their social media accounts. The marketing applied by Burger King is indeed the right thing to do instead of using a hard selling strategy. Because during a pandemic, hard selling strategies such as selling on the roadside are deemed inappropriate, it will reduce reputation and be ineffective. Moreover, coupled with the existence of social restrictions that force people to stay at home. At times of a pandemic like this, it is necessary to create a unique and unusual marketing strategy so that it can steal the attention of customers who see it, even though the effect felt is only short term.



Source: Instagram account @burgerking.id

Figure 2. Empathic marketing strategy

The picture above is an empathic marketing strategy effort carried out by Burger King Indonesia during the covid-19 pandemic. The picture explains that fast food producer Burger King invites its customers to buy products from various other restaurants, including its competitors, namely McDonald's and KFC. Burger king also recommends customers to buy from several other fast food/restaurants such as Pizza Hut, Wendy's, Hokben, J.Co, RM Padang Simple, to Warteg. The

message was uploaded to Burger King Indonesia's Instagram and Facebook accounts, with the title "Order from McDonald's". Burger King in the advertisement not only promotes its own products, but also includes the trade names and products of its competitors. This is a concern that Burger King wants to convey regarding the fate of employees who work at fast food restaurants. To date, the total Burger King outlets have reached 147 in Indonesia and 34,248 employees spread throughout the world. Therefore, the Burger King company invites everyone, that whatever the product and where the product comes from, to jointly make a movement to help buy their products so that no employees at the company are fired, laid off or have their salaries cut at the end of the year. during a pandemic like now. Moreover, for a restaurant company with a labor-intensive system, it is very difficult to survive because for one small restaurant, the waiters can be 30 people. With reduced sales, automatically employees are also exposed to the risk. The role of customers in buying products from other restaurants is expected to help employees survive in the midst of a pandemic situation.

This marketing strategy raises a lot of empathy as well as questions from all netizens because judging from the company relationship between Burger King and McDonald's which "does not get along" and there has been a business war between the two food companies, but Figure 2 is on the contrary, Burger King emphasizes a sense of mutual support and solicitation of collaboration compared to competition. Thus Burger King remains astute in taking advantage of the situation to increase sales by making statements as shown in Figure 2. Burger King encourages consumers to order or buy food at other fast food restaurants. As is known, the COVID-19 pandemic has put pressure on the food and beverage (F&B) sector. Even the opportunities for the restaurant and fast food business are getting weaker along with the low purchasing power of the people so that many restaurants are closed due to expenses that are not balanced with the turnover obtained.

Customer Engagement

Based on the understanding of Fernandes & Esteves (2016) which suggests that customer engagement is the cognitive and emotional level of a customer who is able to present a bond with the services provided by a company so that it can have an influence on consumer choices or tendencies for a brand, product, or company. . Customer engagement can also be interpreted into four "i's" or commonly referred to as "The Four i's" including the following:

1. Involvement: The number of visitors, who come to social media accounts, the number of impressions from the mass media, the number of visitors who come to the store, and others.
2. Intimacy: comments on social media accounts, discussions on forums, and others.
3. Interaction: the number of click-throughs, the number of online and offline transactions, and others.
4. Influence: brand awareness, brand loyalty, level of customer satisfaction, number of repeat orders, and others.

Thus, referring to this definition, it can be concluded that customer engagement is a consumer's response to a brand or product that is manifested in a real action that explains the state of the buyer's liking/dislike of a product and will ultimately affect the level of consumer loyalty. Customer engagement is a liaison between customers. Customers not only consume, but also contribute from reading messages, two-way communication, participating, and providing online recommendations. So that indirectly customers take part in conducting marketing communications for the company. In engaging with social media, companies are expected to do so in a friendly, fun, empathetic, open and supportive way (Men & Tsai, 2015).

Many customers are empathetic in responding to the marketing strategy made by Burger King as shown in Figure 2. Most of them responded with the response that the fast food restaurant company really needs help during this pandemic. The post which became a marketing strategy was also successful in the spotlight of netizens and many parties, so customers from Burger King both helped each other spread the post and invited other customers to help in buying products from the fast food.

Consumers' positive responses to Burger King's posts affect customer interest in trying to buy, so it is likely that consumers will invite other consumers to buy as well. Many comments from netizens who respect the marketing strategy implemented by the fast food restaurant. So this pandemic is a momentum to support each other among business people because conditions like today are not easy for business people to survive. Therefore, through the Burger King post, asking consumers to order the food they like in any way, it can be through delivery, take away, drive-thru, all of which are recommended as long as it supports the food and beverage sector in the midst of a pandemic.

CONCLUSION

At the time of a pandemic like now, the empathic society is indeed on the rise, where people help each other to help each other to survive. This is also confirmed in research conducted by Christie (2020) through MarketingDive which explains that 56% of customers will choose products that have empathy for consumers in difficult times, which in this case is the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also explained that there was a change in consumer behavior, such as almost half (49%) of consumers choosing not to eat out of the home, while the remaining 27% of consumers ordered food delivery or take-away. And about 44% of consumers are not comfortable going out of the house during a pandemic and another 37% they buy goods or food online.

Burgerking during the pandemic is able to read opportunities and then at the same time be adopted as part of their marketing on their social media accounts. The emphatic marketing strategy carried out by Burger King Indonesia is to invite its customers to buy products from various other restaurants, including its competitors, namely McDonald's and KFC. Burger king also recommends customers to buy from several other fast food/restaurants such as Pizza Hut, Wendy's, Hokben, J.Co, RM Padang Simple, to Warteg. The message was uploaded to Burger King Indonesia's Instagram and Facebook accounts, with the title "Order from McDonald's". Burger King in the advertisement not only promotes its own products, but also includes the trade names and products of its competitors.

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The limitation of this study is that it only examines the strategy applied by Burger King in one of the posts on their social media account. But it does not test or measure how much influence or impact the post has on the attractiveness of people to buy products from fast food. For further research, it can focus on researching new strategies in the field of marketing as an effort to update information and add to the repertoire of knowledge. In addition, in-depth testing is also needed regarding the impact of the pandemic on the food and beverage business sector, because the sector is included in the category of business sectors most affected by COVID-19.

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