

Improving Online Marketing and the Role of Local Influencers in Riau Province, Indonesia

Eka Putra

Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau

Email: ekaputra@umri.ac.id

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran influencer lokal dalam pemasaran online di Provinsi Riau, dengan fokus pada empat aspek utama: popularitas, kredibilitas, daya tarik, dan kekuasaan sebagaimana terkandung dalam teori The Meaning Transfer Model. Influencer mempunyai potensi besar untuk menarik perhatian konsumen melalui konten yang menarik. Kredibilitas seorang influencer sangat penting karena konsumen cenderung mempercayai rekomendasinya dalam promosi produk. Daya tarik visual dan interaksi pribadi antara influencer dan pengikut menciptakan hubungan yang erat, meningkatkan keterlibatan dan loyalitas merek. Melalui Instagram, influencer lokal berfungsi sebagai jembatan antara merek dan audiens. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan mewawancarai influencer lokal Riau tentang pengalaman mereka dalam memasarkan produk yang dapat memberikan nilai tambah pada strategi pemasaran online. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa dukungan influencer lokal berdampak positif terhadap pemasaran online. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat menjadi panduan bagi para pemasar dalam merumuskan strategi pemasaran yang lebih efektif di era digital.

Kata Kunci: *influencer, instagram, lokal, pemasaran*

Abstract

This research explores the role of local influencers in online marketing in Riau Province, focusing on four key aspects: popularity, credibility, attractiveness, and power as contained in The Meaning Transfer Model theory. Influencers have great potential to attract consumer attention through interesting content. The credibility of an influencer is very important because consumers tend to trust their recommendations in product promotions. The visual appeal and personal interaction between influencers and followers creates a close relationship, increasing engagement and brand loyalty. Through Instagram, local influencers serve as a bridge between brands and audiences. This research uses qualitative methods by interviewing local Riau influencers about their experiences in marketing products that can provide added value to online marketing strategies. The results show that local influencer support positively impacts online marketing. These findings are expected to guide marketers in formulating more effective marketing strategies in the digital era.

Keywords: *influencer, instagram, local, marketing*

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has brought major changes in world civilization, especially in the field of information technology. This development is very pronounced in Indonesia, with the increasing use of the internet and social media which has become increasingly dominant in the last decade. The internet as metamedia has created a new communication culture, where users can easily interact and share experiences (Gunawan et al., 2021). Currently, social media has become the main platform for communication, not only through text, but also video, sound and images. The use of social media such as Instagram has reached billions of users worldwide (Riadi, 2021). This makes it a very effective communication tool, both for personal and business purposes. Fadhilah & Pratiwi (2021) stated that online marketing using content creator services has a big influence on consumer purchasing decisions, especially Generation Z.

Many business people now use social media to market their products. One common strategy used is endorsement, where celebrities or influencers promote products through their social media accounts. This strategy has proven effective in attracting consumer attention, especially when the celebrity used has high attractiveness and credibility (Puspanidra & Valdiani, 2018). As explained by Dhanesh & Duthler (2019), endorsement is a marketing strategy that involves public figures who have strong influence to promote certain products. This process can be carried out using various methods, such as showing the use of the product, providing positive reviews, or inviting people to buy the product. The main goal is to attract the attention of potential consumers who are interested in the public figure.

In recent years, influencers have become a marketing tool that is increasingly being paid attention to by researchers and practitioners. The results of research conducted by De Veirman et al. (2017) show that influencers have the ability to shape public opinion, especially among the younger generation who are more likely to trust recommendations from figures they follow on social media. This study highlights the importance of credibility, trust, and perceived connectedness between influencers and their followers as key in influencing purchasing decisions.

Online marketing using influencer services is a key component for reaching target consumers on social media (Sanahuja, 2020). An influencer is a public figure who collaborates with brands to promote products or brands to their followers on social media with the aim of influencing purchasing decisions (Nasrul, 2021).

Research by Hariyanti et al. (2019) shows that the use of influencer marketing as a digital marketing strategy is very effective in increasing brand image and awareness among consumers. Based on these studies, according to Shukmalla et al. (2023), it is proven that the combination of content marketing and influencer marketing is effective in supporting marketing efforts. Apart from that, an easy payment system also plays a role in encouraging purchasing decisions. This shows that social media platforms such as Instagram have great potential to motivate and help consumers in purchasing marketed products or services.

Content created by influencers follows an agreed promotional concept, so they are known as endorsers. Using influencers as endorsers is considered effective in increasing purchasing decisions in the digital era. One successful example is the collaboration of a local Indonesian beauty brand with famous creator, Tasya Farasya, who has 4.7 million followers on Instagram. Their campaign through In-Feed Ads on TikTok succeeded in increasing sales by up to 60% and adding more than 60 thousand followers (Sobariyah et al., 2024).

With a large follower base, influencers have the power to influence public opinion and perception. Casalo et al. (2018) in (Sari et al., 2021) added that social media influencers can be considered public opinion leaders. They not only play a role in shaping people's views, but also have a significant influence in determining purchasing decisions through the content they share on social media.

Influencer marketing on Instagram is growing rapidly, apart from other social media platforms. Compared to traditional media such as television, influencer marketing is considered more effective because it is able to build a higher level of trust among their followers. The presence of influencers as a marketing asset is becoming increasingly crucial, especially after the pandemic which caused a surge in social media use (Vrontis et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the influencer marketing trend continues to grow, with more and more local brands utilizing influencers to promote their products (Dwi Septiani, 2019; Permana, 2021).

Nonetheless, most of this research tends to focus on influencers with national or international reach, which leaves a research gap on the role of local influencers in regional marketing contexts. In the Indonesian context, especially in regions such as Riau, the use of local influencers is still not disclosed in depth. Most existing research focuses on large influencers who have global or national influence, while local influencers have their own unique characteristics that have not been widely discussed. Local influencers not only have influence on a smaller scale but are also able to create a more personal connection with their followers, most of whom come from the same area.

Local brands also have an important place in marketing strategies, even though they face challenges both from global brands and from local consumer preferences who tend to choose well-known brands. However, the use of local influencers can help local brands compete with national brands through more personalized marketing and connecting directly with consumers (Sarah, 2019).

Some examples of local influencers in Riau who have succeeded in increasing online sales are @Rizallubis or familiarly known as Rizal who has 15.8 thousand followers. Rizal often gets endorsements from MSMEs and various products such as clothing, shoes and accessories. He used Instagram Reels to create an endorsement video with an OOTD (outfit of the day) concept, and one of his videos received 15.2 thousand views, thus having a positive impact on product sales. Local influencer @razwinnfrnda alias Awin with 17.8 thousand followers also often collaborates with various local brands, especially men's clothing. In his promotion, Awin made an OOTD review video which attracted the attention

of the audience. One of the videos in collaboration with the @dzargoid brand even reached 177 thousand views, showing the popularity of the video.

The research informants used social media Instagram as their medium to endorse products. Instagram itself is a social media platform that is very important for brand marketing strategies, which allows brands to promote their products through various features such as Instagram Stories, Instagram Reels, Instagram Feed, and Instagram Shop (Kusuma & Sugandi, 2018). By doing good branding on their Instagram accounts, local influencers in Pekanbaru can attract the attention of potential customers or clients to collaborate, especially through structured and interesting posts, thereby creating an impression of professionalism on their Instagram accounts.

This research responds to the results of varying studies, such as those conducted by Shadrina et al. (2022), who found that content marketing, influencers, and social media have a significant influence on purchasing decisions on Instagram and TikTok. Other research by Valentina et al. (2023) also stated that influencers and content marketing have a significant positive impact on purchasing decisions. Similar results were presented by Fathan et al. (2023) and Swesti Mahardini et al. (2023). This research aims to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on how local influencers, especially in Riau Province, have successfully utilized social media to drive brand awareness and increase sales of local products. The novelty of this research lies in exploring the role of local influencers in building brand awareness in a more personal and relevant way for local communities, which has not been widely discussed in previous research.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research uses narratives or words to explain the meaning of certain phenomena, symptoms or social situations. In this method, researchers play an important role in understanding and interpreting existing phenomena. Therefore, researchers need to understand related theories in order to analyse the relationship between theoretical concepts and the reality that occurs (Waruwu, 2023). This research focuses more on the quality, characteristics and relationships between activities that occur (Sukmadinata, 2008). In addition, this method aims to describe facts accurately and systematically without trying to test hypotheses or make predictions (Azhari, 2022). The research was conducted in Pekanbaru, Riau Province, because this city is the centre of clear and complete information about the whereabouts of the informants, as well as making it easier for researchers to conduct research. The research was conducted from January to July 2024.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study methodology to understand the role of local influencers in online marketing in Riau Province. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation and digital content analysis of social media posts and audience interactions. This method allows the study to explore the marketing strategies used by influencers in more detail. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach with deductive coding, using the Meaning Transfer Model as an

analytical framework. The process involved transcribing interviews, identifying keywords, grouping themes and interpreting data to understand the marketing patterns used by influencers.

The selection of informants used a purposive sampling technique, involving four local influencers in Pekanbaru who are active in digital marketing. The selection criteria were based on the number of followers, level of audience engagement and engagement with local products. The four come from different fields such as fashion, lifestyle, and makeup and skincare to provide a broader perspective. This number is considered sufficient as it has reached data saturation, where interviews no longer provide significant new insights.

Table 1. Research Informants

Name	Number of Followers	Type of Product Promoted
Rizallubis	15.8 Thousand	Fashion
Nurlailirmdn	2,697	Makeup dan skincare
razwinnfrnda	17.8 Thousand	Fashion, life style
Seltaromelta	6.846	Makeup dan skincare

Source: Researcher's Process (2024)

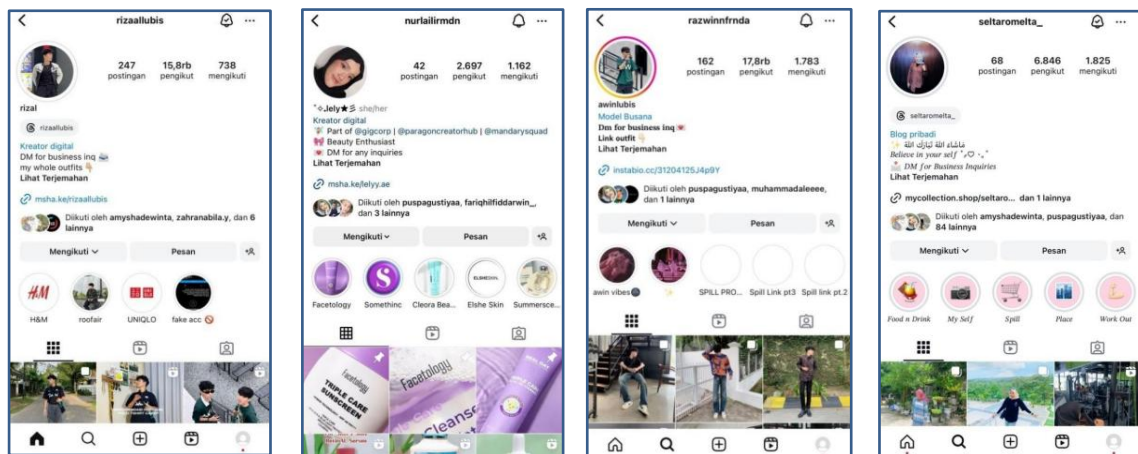


Figure 1. Display of the Informant's Instagram Account

Source: Instagram account @rizallubis, @nurlailirmdn, @razwinnfrnda, @seltaromelta_

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

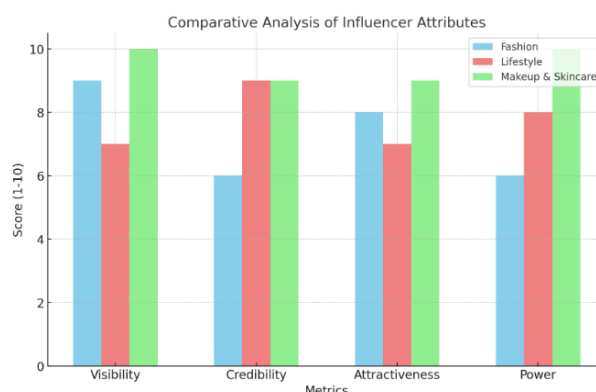
In this section, the researcher analyses the role of endorsement by local influencers in increasing online sales based on the data that has been obtained. The theory that can be used for this influencer endorsement research is The Meaning Transfer Model. This theory explains that celebrities can give meaning to something, and that meaning can be transferred to the product represented by the celebrity. Influencer endorsement is when someone who

has a large following on social media asks for an endorsement to introduce a product to the public. Influencer endorsement can be done by ordinary people who start their careers online and become famous by sharing content with their followers. According to Tian et al. (2022), in influencer marketing, there are four indicators that can be used to measure influencers, namely visibility, credibility, attractiveness, and power.

Research shows that imitation behaviour plays an important role in the successful use of influencers. Referring to The Meaning Transfer Model, this theory explains how the meaning held by an influencer can be transferred to a product through the associations they build. A credible and popular influencer in Pekanbaru, for example, can help promote products in a way that feels more personalised and relevant to potential buyers. Using The Meaning Transfer Model, influencers transfer their values, such as lifestyle and social status, to the promoted products, making consumers feel emotionally connected (Tian et al., 2022). This encourages potential buyers to mimic the consumption behaviour promoted by the influencer, thereby influencing purchase decisions. It is this association between the influencer's image and the product that is key in increasing online sales in Pekanbaru.

On the visibility aspect, the success of digital marketing is greatly influenced by how visible or recognisable the product is in the market. Popularity is not just about how often the product appears, but also how relevant it is to the audience. Using local influencers who have loyal followers is an effective strategy to increase product visibility. Influencers with high popularity in Pekanbaru, for example, can introduce products to their already emotionally engaged audience, so that the promotion not only increases visitor traffic but also influences purchasing decisions and increases brand awareness significantly.

For example, in fashion, products such as clothes, shoes and accessories promoted through popular influencers can quickly catch the attention of their followers. In fact, when the design or trend followed by the influencer goes viral, the popularity of the product is also boosted. Here, the role of influencers as a link between the product and potential buyers is crucial, as their visibility is a major catalyst in driving market interest (Sary, 2021).



The bar chart above illustrates a comparative analysis of influencer attributes - visibility, credibility, appeal and power - across three influencer categories: Fashion, Lifestyle and Makeup & Skincare. Based on the key findings of this analysis, it can be seen that each category has different characteristics in each attribute.

Firstly, in terms of visibility, Makeup & Skincare influencers rank highest, followed by Fashion, while Lifestyle influencers tend to focus more on a specific community. In terms of credibility, Lifestyle and Makeup & Skincare influencers have a higher level of credibility as they are perceived as experts and authentic in the content they produce. In terms of appeal, Fashion and Makeup & Skincare influencers rely more on visual aesthetics, making them more appealing to audiences who value attractive visual displays.

Meanwhile, in terms of power or influence on purchase decisions, Makeup & Skincare influencers have the strongest impact, while Lifestyle influencers are more focused on building long-term trust and loyalty with their audiences. This pattern shows that credibility and attractiveness play an important role in building consumer trust, while visibility and power play an important role in determining how much an influencer can influence trends and purchase decisions.

Informant Nurlaili, a local influencer, explained that an influencer's fame affects their followers. She said;

“Popularitas bukan hanya punya banyak pengikut, namun bagaimana mereka merespon dan berinteraksi dengan konten yang saya buat. Saat saya mempromosikan suatu produk, pengikut saya merasa lebih dekat dengan saya karena mereka memercayai rekomendasi saya, sehingga produk yang saya promosikan lebih mudah dikenali dan diinginkan”. (Popularity is not just having a lot of followers, but how they respond and interact with the content I create. When I promote a product, my followers feel closer to me because they trust my recommendations, so the products I promote are more recognizable and desirable).

Informant Selta, an influencer who often endorses beauty products, also added in the same interview;

“Saat saya mempromosikan produk kecantikan, pengikut saya merasa tertarik karena percaya dengan hasil yang saya tunjukkan. Popularitas memang penting, namun kepercayaan pengikut jauh lebih penting. Ketika mereka melihat saya menggunakan produk yang saya endorse, membuat mereka semakin percaya dan akhirnya mencobanya sendiri”. (When I promote beauty products, my followers feel interested because they believe in the results I show. Popularity is important, but follower trust is much more important. When they see me using the products that I endorse, it makes them believe more and finally try them for themselves).

The statements from Nurlaili and Selta show how the popularity and trustworthiness of influencers play a big role in increasing product visibility, especially in the beauty and fashion industry, so that products become more recognised and in demand by a wide audience. Informant Awin, an influencer who is often endorsed by clothing companies, emphasised that she is asked to always use the company's products in her daily activities;

“Saya selalu menggunakan produk yang saya dukung dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, dan pengikut saya dapat melihatnya. Mereka tahu bahwa saya sangat menyukai produk tersebut, bukan hanya karena endorsementnya. Popularitas itu penting, tapi yang lebih penting adalah mereka tahu bahwa saya jujur dalam mempromosikan produk. Hal itulah yang membuat mereka tertarik untuk membeli”. (I always use

products I endorse in my daily life, and my followers can see that. They know that I really like the product, not just because of the endorsement. Popularity is important, but what is more important is that they know that I am honest in promoting the product. That's what makes them interested in buying).

According to Grave & Bartsch (2022), the popularity aspect of influencers plays an important role in digital marketing as they have the ability to reach a wide audience and connect emotionally with their followers. Popular influencers are able to build more personalised and authentic relationships with audiences compared to traditional promotions, so their recommendations are often considered more trustworthy. This popularity helps their endorsed products become more visible, both directly through the content they create and virally when audiences share the content. In the world of digital marketing, influencers' popularity provides visual appeal and instant attention, which in turn increases awareness and interest in the product.

More than just the number of followers, popularity also involves the level of engagement and trust an influencer has with their audience. Influencers who are known to use the products they endorse in their daily lives, as said by Awin, have a stronger influence because their followers feel confident that the products are truly quality. Therefore, the popularity of influencers not only increases the visibility of the product, but also creates a deeper emotional connection between the product and the consumer, which is very effective in driving purchasing decisions (Jin et al., 2019).

In terms of credibility, this factor greatly influences the purchasing decisions of potential consumers. Influencers who have high credibility often provide honest and transparent reviews of the products they promote, which makes consumers more trusting of their recommendations. Influencer credibility becomes a major attraction as followers are convinced that the promoted products are truly quality (Torres et al, 2019). According to Nascimento et. al (2020), testimonials from other users or in-depth reviews authentically delivered by influencers also help convince consumers of the product's quality. Accurate information regarding the ingredients, benefits of the product, as well as the influencer's personal experience when using the product is essential to increase consumer interest and reach a wider market. In addition, the influencer's proven credibility can encourage consumers to be more interested in the product, even when they offer promo codes or special discounts at certain moments such as holidays.

How potential consumers can be attracted to the credibility of influencers in promoting products, according to informant Laili, is to provide honest and transparent reviews. She said;

“Sebagai seorang influencer, saya senang berbagi pengalaman saya dalam menggunakan produk skincare yang berkualitas, agar konsumen merasa percaya diri dalam memilih produk tersebut. Untuk meyakinkan audiens, saya selalu mengedepankan kredibilitas dengan memberikan review yang jujur dan transparan mengenai manfaat dan keunggulan produk skincare yang saya endorse. Saya juga membagikan testimoni pribadi mengenai hasil yang saya rasakan setelah

menggunakan produk tersebut, seperti bagaimana kulit saya menjadi lebih sehat dan bercahaya. Dengan cara ini, saya ingin menunjukkan kepada calon konsumen bahwa produk perawatan kulit yang harganya terjangkau tetap bisa memberikan manfaat yang setara dengan produk yang lebih mahal". (As an influencer, I love to share my experience using quality skincare products, so that consumers feel confident in choosing these products. To convince my audience, I always prioritise credibility by providing honest and transparent reviews about the benefits and advantages of the skincare products I endorse. I also share personal testimonials about the results I feel after using the product, such as how my skin has become healthier and more radiant. In this way, I want to show potential customers that skincare products that may be affordable can still provide benefits that are equivalent to more expensive products).

Added by informant Awin, she always provides detailed information about the skincare products she promotes, including the advantages and quality of the goods. Awin also displays positive reviews from consumers who have purchased the products to strengthen her credibility. He said;

"Konsumen dapat mengambil keputusan yang tepat dalam membeli produk dan merasa percaya diri. Sebelum mempromosikan suatu produk, saya selalu mengecek terlebih dahulu apakah ada cacat pada produk tersebut, agar saya tidak asal-asalan dalam menerima pesanan. Dengan cara ini, saya dapat memastikan bahwa rekomendasi saya kepada audiens benar-benar dapat diandalkan". (Consumers can make informed decisions about purchasing products and feel confident. Before promoting a product, I always check first if there are any defects in the product, so that I am not careless in taking orders. This way, I can ensure that my recommendations to my audience are truly reliable).

Meanwhile, the variable attractive in this context refers to the elements that make influencer accounts attractive to audiences (Tian et al., 2022). Platforms such as Instagram are becoming an important medium for running marketing campaigns, and the use of accounts with many followers can increase product visibility and attract the attention of a wider audience. However, the number of followers alone is not enough, engaging content that is relevant to the target audience is also very important. A deep understanding of audience preferences, use of the right hashtags, and viral music can expand the reach of posts and increase the appeal of the account.

In addition, Kusuma & Sugandi (2018) explained that the use of Instagram features such as Stories, Reels, and Instagram Shop can strengthen brand image and open up opportunities for collaboration with other brands. Attractive and well-organised visual content on Instagram feeds can also enhance long-term branding and give a professional impression to the brand. Thus, the attractiveness of influencer accounts is a key factor in attracting attention and building engagement with audiences.

According to informant Nurlaili, in promoting products, account attractiveness is very important, and the number of followers can affect the success of a product. She added;

"Video yang dibuat untuk promosi produk atau brand bisa sangat berpengaruh bagi orang-orang yang belum mengenal kita di media sosial. Misalnya, video Reels yang kita buat bisa muncul di 'For Your Page' orang-orang yang tidak mengikuti kita,

namun mereka menyukai kontennya. Dari situ mereka bisa membeli produk meski tidak mengikuti kita. Namun terkadang tidak semua orang yang belum mengenal kita akan menonton video tersebut sehingga pengaruhnya tidak terlalu besar terhadap penjualan kita. Jadi, walaupun videonya menarik perhatian masyarakat, tetap belum bisa dijamin dampaknya besar". (Videos made for product or brand promotion can be very influential for people who don't know us on social media. For example, the Reels videos we make can appear on the 'For You Page' of people who don't follow us, but they like the content. From there, they can buy products even though they don't follow us. However, sometimes not everyone who doesn't know us will watch the video, so the effect is not that big for our sales. So, even if the video catches people's attention, it still can't be guaranteed that it will have a big impact).

Rizal also added;

"Semakin banyak jumlah follower kita, maka semakin besar pula kemungkinan orang melihat postingan kita. Namun demikian, kita tidak bisa hanya fokus pada jumlah pengikut saja. Saat memposting foto atau ulasan suatu produk, penting untuk menggunakan hashtag dan musik viral yang relevan untuk meningkatkan daya tarik konten kami, sehingga meningkatkan jangkauannya". (The more followers we have, the greater the possibility of people seeing our posts. However, we cannot just focus on the number of followers. When posting photos or reviews of a product, it is important to use relevant hashtags and viral music to increase the appeal of our content, thereby increasing its reach).

Most influencers, Rizal said, prefer the Instagram platform as their promotional medium. Informant Awin explained that Instagram is now a very popular platform to promote products or businesses to the general public, thanks to its appeal.

"Instagram menyediakan banyak fitur untuk mengiklankan produk saya, seperti Instagram Stories, Instagram Reels, Instagram Feed, dan Instagram Shop. Dengan semua fitur tersebut, Instagram dapat membantu saya mempromosikan produk saya dengan cara yang menarik, mudah dan efektif". (Instagram provides many features to advertise my products, such as Instagram Stories, Instagram Reels, Instagram Feed, and Instagram Shop. With all these features, Instagram can help me promote my products in an interesting, easy and effective way).

Awin admitted that initially he only had a hobby of photographing interesting objects. However, the positive response from Instagram users to her photos turned out to be very satisfying. Her posts were liked by many followers, and many sent messages to invite cooperation. Some brands also invite collaboration with a barter system, where Awin makes product review videos that will be posted on his Instagram account. In addition, there are also those who offer review packages and provide fees.

Informant Selta added that Instagram is indeed an attractive place for young people because there are many users from teenagers, children, and even adults. Selta said;

"Pada dasarnya Instagram sudah menjadi marketplace bagi anak muda. Saya sendiri sudah menggunakan Instagram sejak tahun 2018, dan kini semakin banyak orang khususnya influencer yang memanfaatkan akunnya untuk memasarkan produk". (Basically, Instagram has become a marketplace for young people. I myself

have been using Instagram since 2018, and now more and more people, especially influencers, are utilising their accounts to market products).

The statement reveals that Instagram has a strong appeal to various age groups, not just teenagers, but also children and adults. It has become one of the most significant social media platforms in a brand's marketing strategy, due to its ability to appeal to diverse demographics. Features such as Instagram Stories, Instagram Reels, Instagram Feed and Instagram Shop provide interactive and creative visual appeal, thus helping brands reach a wider audience. With these features, brands can increase consumer engagement through interesting and relevant content, thereby strengthening the product's appeal in the market (Kusuma & Sugandi, 2018).

In terms of power, the role of influencers is crucial in boosting online sales. Influencers have the power to influence purchasing decisions through the content they create, such as posts, photos, or videos published on their social media accounts. With the power they have, influencers can attract audience attention through reviews, contests, or giveaways that they manage. Consistency in brand management and proper marketing strategies are essential for these influencer promotional campaigns to be successful. In addition, posting regularly with content that follows the latest trends, using viral music, and adding interesting captions will further increase audience appeal (Tian et al., 2022).

Showcasing the product in detail by mentioning its advantages and qualities in reviews posted by influencers is an effective way to strengthen the popularity of the product. A catchy caption can draw users' attention, while an attractive discount or promo will encourage them to make a purchase. In this digital era, the power of social media platforms such as Instagram as a promotional tool is becoming increasingly relevant, as it is able to reach and influence a wide audience.

Here is how the informants promote the products they endorse by showcasing the strengths of the products and the content they produce. Nurlaili said;

"Saya mempromosikan suatu produk dengan memanfaatkan kekuatan media sosial. Sering memposting video menarik dan menginformasikan kepada penonton tentang diskon atau promosi lainnya untuk meningkatkan daya tarik produk". (I promote a product by utilizing the power of social media. Frequently post interesting videos and inform viewers about discounts or other promotions to increase product appeal).

Meanwhile Selta added;

"Dalam menampilkan produk yang dipromosikan, saya membuat video pendek berdurasi 1 menit yang memanfaatkan kekuatan visual dan teks informatif, termasuk nama merek dan penandaan, serta memberikan informasi harga diskon untuk setiap pembelian melalui tautan saya. Inilah kekuatan postingan saya untuk menarik perhatian semua pemirsa". (In showcasing promoted products, I create short 1-minute videos that utilize the power of visuals and informative text, including brand names and tagging, as well as providing discount price information for each purchase through my link. This is the power of my posts to attract the attention of all viewers.).

Awin also added;

“Saya memanfaatkan kekuatan tren dengan sering memposting foto atau video populer. Saya menggunakan suara viral untuk menarik perhatian penonton, serta menawarkan diskon untuk meningkatkan daya beli.” (I harness the power of trends by frequently posting popular photos or videos. I use viral sounds to attract audience attention, as well as offer discounts to increase purchasing power).

Meanwhile Riza said;

“Dengan mengambil foto atau video di tempat yang estetik, kemudian menambahkan caption yang menarik. Saya memanfaatkan kekuatan visual dan kata-kata, sehingga orang tertarik melihat produk yang saya promosikan. Hal ini membantu meningkatkan penjualan dan memperkuat brand produk di mata pengguna platform media sosial seperti Instagram”. (By taking photos or videos in aesthetic places, then adding interesting captions. I utilize the power of visuals and words, so that people are interested in seeing the products I am promoting. This helps increase sales and strengthen the product brand in the eyes of users of social media platforms such as Instagram).

From the informant's statement above, it can be seen that influencers often review products in detail, explaining their advantages and qualities. This way, followers who see the promotion can understand the advantages and benefits of the products offered, which in turn can help them make better purchasing decisions. Marketing strategies through local influencers have also proven to be effective, as their influence and distinctiveness of their content is able to increase product sales. Hence, many companies have started to utilise local influencers for the promotion and marketing of their products on social media.

From the research conducted, it is seen that influencers often review products in detail, explaining their advantages and qualities. In this way, followers who see the promotion can understand the advantages and benefits of the products offered, thus helping them make better purchasing decisions. Marketing strategies through influencers have proven to be effective, as their influence is able to increase product sales. Therefore, many companies have started to utilise influencers for the promotion and marketing of their products on social media. This standpoint is consistent with the assertion put forth by Dwi Septiani (2019), who posits that the primary objective of endorsements undertaken by influencers, including local influencers, is to capture the attention of potential consumers, thereby fostering heightened purchasing interest.

The advantages of local influencers include their closeness to the audience. Local influencers often share similar backgrounds, experiences and values with their followers, creating a more intimate and authentic relationship. This trust of followers towards local influencers is a valuable asset used by brands to promote their products. In addition, local influencers better understand the cultural context and needs of the local market, so they can deliver marketing messages more relevantly and effectively.

Local influencers also have the ability to create more specific and targeted content (Mansyur, 2023). By understanding their audience, influencers can create content that matches followers' preferences and interests, thereby increasing the level of engagement and response to the promoted products. This ability also allows them to become a bridge

between brands and consumers, communicating product values in a more engaging and relatable way. Despite the many opportunities, local influencers also face a number of challenges, such as the high level of competition on social media platforms, where many influencers are vying for the attention of the audience. In addition, changes in social media algorithms can affect the visibility of their content, requiring influencers to constantly adapt to the latest trends to stay relevant. Another challenge is the potential for negative feedback from audiences that can affect their image and the products they endorse.

In the context of using local influencers in marketing, The Meaning Transfer Model provides a relevant framework to understand how meaning can be transferred from influencers to the products they promote. The model consists of four main interconnected aspects, namely visibility, credibility, attractiveness, and power. Using The Meaning Transfer Model, influencers transfer their values, such as lifestyle and social status, to the promoted products, making consumers feel emotionally connected (Tian et al., 2022). The popularity of an influencer greatly affects their ability to reach a wider audience. Local influencers who have a large and active following can increase the visibility of the products they promote. When a product appears in the content of a popular influencer, the chance for the product to be seen and noticed by more people also increases.

The research gap on local influencers needs to be further developed. While there are many studies that focus on influencers in general, studies that specifically address local influencers, especially in Riau province, are still very limited. This creates an opportunity for researchers to dig deeper into the dynamics of local influencers, follower behaviour, as well as effective strategies in marketing products through influencers. Further research can help understand the unique characteristics of local influencers and their impact on consumer behaviour in specific regions.

The existence of local influencers as a profitable and interesting profession to be studied further is a novelty that can be taken from this research. Local influencers are not only a bridge between products and consumers, but also create an identity and community around them. According to Isalman et al. (2023), by building closer and more personalised relationships with their followers, local influencers have the power to influence public opinion and purchasing decisions in a more authentic way compared to traditional advertising. This shows that the local influencer profession is not just a trend, but also has great potential to grow in the future.

This study supports the Meaning Transfer Model, which explains how an influencer's meaning can be transferred to a product through the associations they create. Local influencers, with their inherent characters and values, are able to create emotional connections with their audiences. When they endorse a product, the meaning they hold - be it visibility, credentials, attractiveness or power - can be transferred to the product in the minds of consumers.

By better understanding the role of local influencers, this study provides insight into how the process of meaning transfer in digital marketing occurs in a local context. The

opportunities for local influencers are vast, as they have a cultural closeness to their audience that strengthens the association between influencers and the products they promote. However, challenges such as maintaining credibility and dealing with changes in digital platform algorithms remain factors that need to be addressed. Therefore, this study not only describes the dynamics of the role of local influencers, but also how they can continue to adapt and thrive in an increasingly competitive marketing ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

In the current digital era, the role of local influencers in Riau Province is increasingly important in marketing strategies on social media. The aspect of influencer visibility or popularity is the main key in attracting consumer attention. Influencers who have a large number of followers and interesting content can reach a wider audience. Through platforms like Instagram, they not only promote products but also create strong brand awareness. Their ability to cultivate relevant content and keep up with the latest trends helps the products they endorse to stand out amidst stiff competition.

Apart from popularity, credibility of local influencers also plays an important role in building consumer trust, especially in Riau Province. Influencers who uphold transparency and honesty in all their product promotions will be more trusted by their followers. Through honest reviews and accurate information, influencers can convince their audience that the products they offer are worth the quality and benefits. In this context, credibility becomes a bridge that connects consumers with products, which ultimately has a positive impact on purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that the credibility of local influencers in Riau has a significant impact in building brand loyalty among consumers, which is the result of their direct experience in using and recommending products.

Lastly, the aspect of attractiveness or attraction possessed by local influencers is also a driving factor in influencing the audience. The use of aesthetic visuals, interesting captions, and interactive content will increase user engagement with the product being promoted. Apart from that, the power of local influencers in shaping public opinion cannot be ignored. Influencers have the potential to change consumer views and preferences, especially when they leverage the personal relationships they have built with their audiences.

The novelty of this study lies in the in-depth exploration of the unique experiences of local influencers in Pekanbaru in supporting online marketing strategies. Understanding these experiences helps to strengthen the concept of The Meaning Transfer Model, which helps to design more adaptive and effective marketing strategies using local influencers.

According to the Meaning Transfer Model, which includes aspects of visibility, credibility, attractiveness and influence, local influencers play a strategic role in increasing product competitiveness in the digital market. Their benefits are not limited to increasing product visibility and appeal, but also to creating stronger emotional connections with consumers through high authenticity and engagement. Furthermore, this study makes a practical contribution to the development of local products in Riau Province by providing

insights on how to optimise the role of influencers in supporting digital-based marketing. These findings are expected to be a reference for industry players in designing marketing strategies that are more in line with the characteristics of local and national markets.

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