

The Role of Social Media Activities to Enhance Brand Equity

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ABSTRACT

The direct impact of the economic downturn due to Covid-19 is mainly perceived by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This study aims to examine how MSMEs can understand customer needs regarding the provision of social media quality that can improve brand image and brand awareness. The survey was conducted on 145 respondents who had online shopping experience using social media by utilizing the structural equation modeling approach. Results show that social media quality can increase brand awareness, brand image, and social media marketing activities. Therefore, marketers who use social media can focus on its constituent indicators including content quality, design quality, information quality, interaction quality, contact availability, and contact relevance. Customers will have a high level of brand awareness and a good brand image if marketers can provide social media quality to meet customer demands. While previous studies found that there is a positive relationship between social media marketing activities on brand image and brand awareness, this study shows the opposite result because customers are not affected by the activities carried out by social media. This is considered a usual activity that other marketers also carry out. The implication of this study is that good social media quality is needed to increase brand awareness, brand image, and social media marketing activities.

ABSTRAK

Dampak langsung dari pelemahan ekonomi akibat Covid-19 terutama dirasakan oleh pelaku Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji bagaimana UMKM dapat memahami kebutuhan pelanggan mengenai penyediaan media sosial berkualitas yang dapat meningkatkan citra merek dan kesadaran merek. Survei dilakukan terhadap 145 responden yang sudah memiliki pengalaman belanja online menggunakan media sosial dengan menggunakan pendekatan structural equation modeling. Penelitian ini menunjukkan hasil bahwa kualitas media sosial dapat meningkatkan kesadaran merek dan citra merek serta kegiatan pemasaran media sosial. Sehingga pemasar yang menggunakan media sosial dapat fokus pada indikator penyusunnya kualitas konten, kualitas desain, kualitas informasi, kualitas interaksi, ketersediaan kontak, dan relevansi kontak. Pelanggan akan memiliki tingkat kesadaran merek yang tinggi dan citra merek yang baik jika pemasar dapat menyediakan media sosial berkualitas yang dapat memenuhi permintaan pelanggan. Ada hasil lain yang menarik yaitu ketika penelitian lain menyatakan bahwa ada hubungan positif antara aktivitas pemasaran media sosial terhadap citra merek dan kesadaran merek, namun penelitian ini memberikan hasil yang tidak berpengaruh karena pelanggan tidak terpengaruh oleh aktivitas yang dilakukan oleh media sosial. Hal ini dianggap sebagai aktivitas yang biasa dilakukan oleh pemasar lain. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah dibutuhkan kualitas media sosial yang baik untuk dapat meningkatkan kesadaran dan citra merek serta kegiatan pemasaran media sosial.

1. INTRODUCTION

A covid-19 global pandemic has not only resulted in the death of the Indonesian people but also weakened the people's economy (Central Bank of Indonesia, 2020; Olivia et al., 2020). Various

companies face problems in handling business during the pandemic (Shafi et al., 2020), therefore they must carry out the right strategy to overcome it. However, the problems have made a direct impact on the micro, small, and medium enterprises

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(MSMEs). When compared with large SMEs, MSMEs do not have adequate sources, especially in the financial and managerial fields (Bartik et al., 2020; Prasad et al., 2014). MSMEs have lower capabilities, assets, and levels of productivity than large companies (OECD Secretary-General, 2020).

The government implemented physical distancing that requires people to reduce their outdoor activities and it affected consumer behavior in consumption and on the other hand, increased the use of the internet and social media (Ballantine et al., 2014; Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020; Larson & Shin, 2018; Sheu & Kuo, 2020). This condition encouraged MSMEs to find a new marketing approach to face the pandemic. The difference in consumption behavior today indicates that there is a transformation of the business from traditional to digital. Business actors must be able to take advantage of digital tools as a complement to business processes, one of which is social media.

Social media is a new reality in communicating in today's digital era that can be used as a business communication strategy for the marketer. Social media is a communication that is not only used between consumers but can also be used between consumers and brands (Alansari et al., 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2014). However, the issue that needs to be considered is whether marketers can influence the customer. Conceptually, social media is a framework for the quality of customers' electronic services because it is the result of technological advances that change the way we communicate (Suryani et al., 2020). Therefore, this is important for marketers to provide social media quality to enhance their business.

The success of MSMEs in utilizing social media depends on how to maximize all the provided features to improve their products which simultaneously can increase customer perceptions of brand quality (Suryani et al., 2020). When marketers can contribute to customers by gaining positive experiences on social media, this will lead to a better brand reputation and increased sales (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This positive experience can be interpreted as a result of social media quality management which can influence brand awareness and brand image (Suryani et al., 2020).

Previous research has discussed the use of social media for the success of MSMEs (Alzougool, 2019; Hsiao et al., 2020; Odoom & Mensah, 2018; Suryani et al., 2020; Wardati & Er, 2019). However, there is a lack of studies that discussed how the activities carried out by social media users are used as an influencing factor in the success of social media

marketing. Marketers must learn how to engage customers to drive engagement into social media (Roberts & Piller, 2017). These activities can be in the form of "likes" and "comments" (Khan et al., 2019). Customer involvement is used as the key to the success of social media marketing (Carloso, 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2014). So this research develops previous research related to social media quality (Suryani et al., 2020) by involving social media marketing activities in influencing the improvement of brand image and brand awareness for MSMEs.

This paper aims to examine whether MSMEs that are digitally transforming by leveraging social media can make them find more resources to enhance their brands. Although several previous studies have discussed social media activities that can increase brand equity (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Zollo et al., 2020), there is no detailed discussion on what activities can contribute to brand enhancement and have not looked at from the perception of consumers who access the online media.

Finally, this research has contributed to the extension of the concept of social media quality (Odoom et al., 2017; Suryani et al., 2020) and social media marketing activities (Khan et al., 2019) which can be utilized by MSMEs. When MSMEs can perform social media quality for their marketing, MSMEs will be able to build and maintain online relationships which in turn provides benefits for marketers (Aladwani, 2017).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Social media is defined as internet-based applications built on ideologies and Web 2.0 technology that allow users to exchange content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Some companies use social media as a strategic communication platform to connect with consumers for informative and interactive actions that can support business (Baumöl et al., 2016; Odoom et al., 2017). Recent research on the motivation to use social media, such as Instagram (Kang & Wei, 2020), Facebook (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019), and YouTube (Khan, 2017), focuses on activities carried out by users. Various types of social media can be used by MSMEs players to develop their business because it can be done easily without having to know deeply about technology (AlSharji et al., 2018). Creativity and innovation are needed to maximize the function of social media (Crammond et al., 2018).

Social media is a communication tool that can influence consumer behavior, including in obtaining information, attitudes, purchasing, and evaluating

products (Kim et al., 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). An empirical study found that good social media management will influence public perceptions of companies (Risius & Beck, 2015). For instance, in the case of Facebook, when users obtain some information about products and services from their friends, their likelihood of becoming consumers is 15% higher than from other communication channels (Hudson et al., 2015). Therefore, social media quality is important to increase customer activity to be involved in social media.

Aaker & Keller (1990) developed the concept of customer-based brand equity behavior which consists of two dimensions, namely brand awareness and brand image, and are defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge resulting from customers on product marketing. Researchers argue that these two dimensions are appropriate to be used to discuss online consumer behavior.

When marketers can take advantage of good social media, it can increase brand equity, especially brand awareness and brand image (Khan & Fatma, 2019; Suryani et al., 2020) because there is a significant relationship to maintaining the continuity and growth of MSMEs (Reijonen et al., 2012; Urde, 1994; Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Brand awareness is a fundamental component of brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). Brand awareness refers to the strength of a brand presence in the consumers' minds (Pappu et al., 2005) and is also defined as a customer's ability to recognize and remember a brand as part of a product (Keller & Aaker, 1990). When brand awareness of the consumers is high, it will provide benefits for marketers because it contributes to customer considerations when choosing products and in the decision-making process (Seetharaman et al., 2001).

The other component of brand equity is the brand image. Brand image can influence consumers to act on certain products or services on social media (Hofmann et al., 2019; Humphrey et al., 2017; Keller, 1993). Brand image is defined as the perception of a particular brand that is in the memory of consumers (Yuan et al., 2016). However, the effectiveness of a brand on social media is highly dependent on the quality of information, the credibility of information, and attitudes towards information (Colton & Poploski, 2019; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Therefore, marketers need to be able to create social media to attract consumers to see the content of the products and services provided. This study proposes the following hypothesis.

H₁: Social media quality has a significant effect on brand awareness

H₂: Social media quality has a significant effect on brand image

H₃: Social media quality has a significant effect on social media marketing activities

Social media platforms can be used to achieve marketing goals (Sharma & Verma, 2018). Social media marketing is defined as the use of social media to promote a company or product (Akar & Topçu, 2011). For instance on social media Facebook, the impact of the number of "likes" posts will affect people's interest in choosing products (Duffett, 2015; Rutter et al., 2016). Besides, the advantages of promoting on Facebook are not only able to interact with customers but also can create and presenting stories for the brand (Smith & Gallicano, 2015).

Marketing is considered a part of social media marketing activities such as interaction, sharing, and trendiness (Khan et al., 2019). Interaction facilitates users to contribute to social media platforms regarding certain brands (Muntinga et al., 2011). Interaction is the ability of luxury brands to allow sharing and exchange of information with others on social media. The participatory nature of social media allows for collaborating and sharing content, including information, videos, and images (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). The interactivity of corporate social media posts is important because it promotes customer reactions, such as liking and commenting on company posts (De Vries et al., 2012).

Marketers can facilitate communication and interaction through digital platforms with consumers. Especially in small companies or MSMEs, it is easier to increase business activities to create value because they have a lower portfolio of financial resources and a less complex approval system compared to large companies (Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015). Several studies have explained that marketers can influence consumer attitudes towards their products or services through social media (Alalwan et al., 2017; Baum et al., 2018). When social media activity is carried out positively, it can influence brand image which can build emotional attachment with consumers (Barreda et al., 2020).

Trendiness is defined as the activity of providing the latest information about a product or service (Godey et al., 2016). Muntinga et al. (2011) provide an explanation of the scope of trendiness, namely, surveillance that describes a person's environment; knowledge that refers to brand-

related information that benefits consumers; pre-purchase information that helps consumers to consider decision-making; and related inspiration with information to get new ideas. Many previous researchers discussed the relationship of social media marketing activities to brand equity (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Koay et al., 2020). The higher the activity carried out by marketers on social media, the higher the brand image and brand awareness in the minds

of customers (Seo & Park, 2018). Therefore, the next hypotheses are proposed as follows.

- H4: Social media marketing activity has a significant effect on brand awareness
- H5: Social media marketing activity has a significant effect on brand image

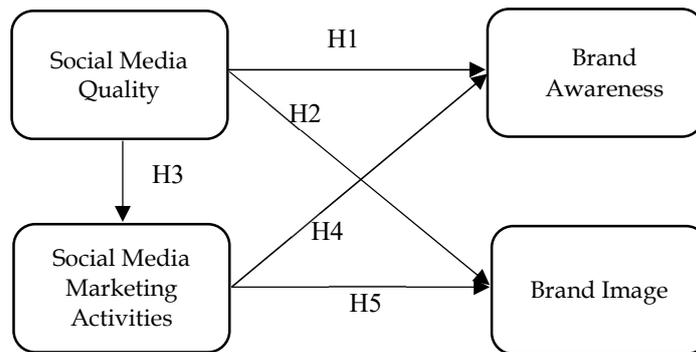


Figure 1. Research model

Figure 1 explains how the role of social media can affect the increase in brand equity which in this study focuses on brand image and brand awareness. It can have implications for increasing sales (Khajeh Nobar et al., 2020; Marjerison & Gan, 2020) which can benefit MSMEs players.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach. Purposive sampling is used since the researcher applied some judgment as criteria to select respondents who can answer research questions (Etikan, 2016). The respondents are consumers who have bought a product because they are exposed to social media

influence.

Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire survey with 146 respondents who had bought products from MSMEs that had social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, and had several characteristics as shown in Table 1. Respondents have bought products from MSMEs that focused their business on fashion 62%, cosmetics 16.5%, food and beverages 5.5%, and electronics 16%. Furthermore, the data shows that the most used social media by MSMEs is Instagram at 89%. To ensure that respondents understand the questions asked, the researcher provided additional information to the questionnaire.

Table 1. Sample characteristic

Characteristic	Total	Percentage	Characteristic	Total	Percentage
Gender			Age		
Male	59	40.7%	18-20	71	49.0%
Female	86	59.3%	21-25	61	42.0%
Social Media			26-30	8	5.5%
Instagram	129	89.0%	31-35	5	3.5%
Facebook	13	9.0%	Product		
Youtube	3	2.0%	Fashion	90	62.0%
Shopping experience through social media			Cosmetic	24	16.5%
< 3 months	17	12.0%	Food	8	5.5%
4 -12 months	25	17.0%	Electronic	23	16.0%
> 1 months	103	71.0%			

The questions in the questionnaire were adopted from previous research on social media quality (Suryani et al., 2020) which has indicators of quality content, design quality, information quality,

interaction quality, contact availability, and contact relevance. The social media marketing activities variable uses indicators that consist of interactions, sharing, and trendiness (Khan et al., 2019), as well as

the dependent variable, i.e., brand awareness and brand image (Khan & Fatma, 2019).

The survey consists of several processes. The first step was collecting data from questionnaires submitted to respondents. In this step, 146 respondents were questioned about their demographics' information and shopping experiences through social media. A total of 34 questions were also asked to determine the relationship of observed variables. The second step was processing the data using statistical tools. After the data was obtained under the specific requirements, data were analyzed by using a variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM)

approach in Smart PLS 3.0. The third process was interpreting the data findings based on existing theories.

Prior to hypothesis testing, this study conducted validity and reliability testing for all the measurement items. The internal consistency of the constructs used was checked through Cronbach's alpha (CA) value with a standard of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2018). Based on Table 2, all items were above 0.70. The composite reliability (CR) of each construction meets the minimum standard value of 0.70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The average variance extracted (AVE) of all constructs exceeds the 0.50 threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2. Overall measurement model

Items	Outer Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Social media quality		0.969	0.972	0.609
<i>Content quality</i>				
Social media account displays good quality (image/video) content	0.804			
The content resolution (image/video) of the social media account looks good	0.770			
The contents (image/video) of social media account are visible	0.841			
<i>Design quality</i>				
The color combination on the social media account is attracting the consumers' attention	0.720			
Social media account displays interesting content (image/video) of their products	0.810			
Social media account posts engaging content (image/video) according to the brand image	0.793			
The contents of the SMEs' social media account display exciting themes	0.813			
<i>Information quality</i>				
Social media account displays accurate information	0.802			
The available information on the social media account is reliable	0.796			
The information presented by the social media account is easy to understand	0.839			
Social media account presents the information I need about the offered products	0.779			
<i>Interaction quality</i>				
I found it easy to interact with the social media account's managers	0.703			
Social media account managers have a desire to respond to consumer needs	0.777			
Social media account manager provides after-sales service by communicating via Direct Message (DM) or the comments column	0.707			
<i>Contact availability</i>				
Consumers can easily find contact information on social media account	0.815			
Social media account provides information about the location of the store of the business	0.805			
<i>Contact relevance</i>				
Social media account is fascinating because it always displays the latest updates about their products.	0.826			
Social media account is fun because it tries to display product contents (image/video) that match the offered original products	0.777			
Social media account is fascinating because they always display contents (image/video) that are relevant to their business	0.843			
Social media marketing activities		0.862	0.892	0.510
<i>Interactions</i>				
More positive comments on X brand enable me to identify X brand easily.	0.718			
<i>Sharing</i>				
The X brand that I followed has more posts/tweets on social media	0.720			
More posts/tweets about X brand enable me to identify X brand easily	0.745			
More links to/from other social media about the X brand increase its popularity.	0.760			

Items	Outer Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Trendiness				
The brand that I followed has the latest information on social media	0.781			
More trendy information about the X brand enables me to identify the X brand easily.	0.727			
Brand awareness				
I am always aware of X brand through social media	0.866	0.782	0.874	0.699
X brand's social media enables me to keep X brand characteristics in my mind.	0.891			
X brand's social media enables me to recall the symbol or logo of X brand quickly.	0.743			
Brand image				
X brand is customer-oriented on the social media platform.	0.805	0.825	0.896	0.743
Social media enables me to keep an impressive memory of the X brand.	0.897			
Brand X is a leading brand on social media.	0.881			

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Hypothesis Testing

A structural model is analyzed according to the hypothesized relationships in the research model. The parameters were estimated by using Smart-PLS 3.0. One hundred and forty-six samples were bootstrapped to calculate the significance of the parameters. The results report path coefficients, R2

of endogenous variables, effect sizes, and the predictive relevance of the model (Hair Jr. et al., 2017). In bootstrap testing, the resampling method is used to calculate the significance of the PLS coefficient. Table 3 shows the structural results hypothesized through the model test and path coefficients with the required p-values <0.005 and t-values above 1.96.

Table 3. Path coefficient

Relationship	Hypothesis	Coefficient	t-Value	p-Values
Social media quality to brand awareness	H ₁	0.657	6.129	0.000
Social media quality to brand image	H ₂	0.582	5.866	0.000
Social media quality to social media marketing activities	H ₃	0.802	20.562	0.000
Social media marketing activities to brand awareness	H ₄	-0.094	0.630	0.529
Social media marketing activities to brand image	H ₅	0.097	0.678	0.498

The test on hypothesis 1 shows that social media quality has a direct and positive effect on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.657$, $t = 6.129$, $p < 0.000$). Hypothesis 2 test shows that social media quality has a direct and positive effect on the brand image ($\beta = 0.582$, $t = 5.866$, $p < 0.000$). Hypothesis 3 is also supported, by showing that social media quality has a direct and positive effect on social media marketing activities ($\beta = 0.802$, $t = 20.562$, $p < 0.000$). These results show that the better the quality of the social media account, the more likely it will affect the tendency of customers to be actively involved in social media, such as giving likes and comments. These findings become very important when marketers use social media as a medium for creating customer engagement which will have implications for increased sales (Hsiao et al., 2020). Marketers can take advantage of various social media platforms to increase social media marketing activities. This is relevant to Odoom et al. (2017) that marketers cannot solely use social media for their basic needs but also can take all the advantages to achieve marketers' goals.

The test on hypothesis 4 indicates that social media marketing activities have an insignificant effect

on brand awareness ($\beta = -0.094$, $t = 0.630$, $p > 0.529$). Hypothesis 5 also does not obtain support, that is social media marketing activities have an insignificant effect on the brand image ($\beta = 0.097$, $t = 0.678$, $p > 0.498$). These results are not in line with the results from the previous study (Godey et al., 2016; Khajeh Nobar et al., 2020) which states that there is a positive effect of social media marketing activities on brand image and brand awareness. However, this study's findings state that the two variables do not affect the dependent variables. This is because there is no evidence that all customers who shop online via social media can actually remember store brands on social media. Since social media has a strong impact on the sustainability of the company, behavioral issues of consumers on social media, such as negative reviews, can lead to negative effects and threat perception to the other consumers. It raises consumers' negative perception that the company does not behave well on social media and potentially leads to the disloyalty of online consumers in Indonesia (Jalonen & Jussila, 2016).

These results support the statement of Suryani et al. (2020) that when marketers can provide content

that has value for customers, it will have an impact on customer perceptions of the brand. Customers will see social media for good or bad reasons based on several criteria, namely having a quality design and quality content such as image and video resolutions that indicates that the content is good to follow. Customers consume brand-related content on social media because they want to get fun, relaxation, and entertainment (Muntinga et al., 2011). When marketers can provide quality on their social media accounts, then they must provide useful information for customers. This information is an antecedent of the importance of content shared by social media (Dedeoglu, 2018).

Discussion

Not only are being able to present good social media accounts to increase the customer's perspective on the brand, but two-way communication or interaction quality should also be taken into consideration. It is for good communication can be established between marketers and customers, since nowadays many people do more online interaction than offline. It shows the change in the way humans socialize and communicate (Lieberman & Schroeder, 2020). This condition must be understood by marketers, especially MSMEs players, to pay attention to how to build a good interaction with customers. The results show that customers prefer social media account owners who are responsive in answering questions, both in solving questions about products and responding to customer complaints.

Consumers tend to buy products based on product quality and social media accounts based on customer needs and may change MSMEs in the future according to their needs, not from the social media store activities carried out. There is no indication that social media market-information activities which include indicators that form interactions, shares, and trendiness can have an impact on increasing brand image and brand awareness. Marketers may be able to focus on other activities such as other social media marketing activities such as entertainment, perceived risk, customization, and word of mouth (Chen & Lin, 2019; Seo & Park, 2018) which have been proven to be able to increase brand image and brand awareness.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused changes in consumer behavior that have an impact on the way marketers carry out marketing strategies, namely collaborating between offline and online marketing methods (Sheth, 2020). So, marketers need to

understand how to do online marketing by utilizing social media. The purpose of this research is to analyze the effect of social media quality used by marketers in increasing the perception of brand image and brand awareness. From the customers' point of view who use social media in carrying out the online shopping process, this research is expected to provide input for online marketers in utilizing social media, especially for MSMEs who still do not use social media, so they can find out what to prepare to use social media as a marketing tool. Quantitative studies are carried out to achieve research objectives. The study results show that Instagram is the top customers' choice in online shopping compared to YouTube and Facebook. Besides, the results indicate that customers will have a high level of brand awareness and a good brand image if marketers can provide social media quality that meets customer demands. On the other hand, this research shows another interesting result, that is when other research states that there is a positive relationship between social media marketing activities on brand image and brand awareness, this research finds no effect because customers are not affected by the activities carried out by social media. It may be because social media activity is considered a usual activity that is also carried out by other marketers. To noted by marketers who use social media as a marketing tool for their brand, social media is not only a place to sell or find consumers, but also a place to create interaction between marketers and customers. This engagement will make closeness between consumers and marketers. Thus, the consumers' desire to buy must be raised by marketers with activities carried out on social media. In the end, it is about how to create a positive memory of the company's brand in the consumers' minds.

The findings have valuable implications for managerial actions, especially in the use of social media in enhancing brands. The key to the success of social media marketing is to carry out activities in the form of providing content that provides benefits to consumers. The content can be in the form of useful information, entertainment, and others that can arouse consumer engagement. These results also support the findings of Febrian et al. (2021) regarding digital content marketing. When consumers feel comfortable enjoying the content displayed on social media, they will remember the brand with a positive experience. Social media marketing is different from what other marketers do to reach a wider range of consumers by placing advertisements on television and other conventional

media which seem more expensive and cannot be measured in real-time. It is more convenient and cheaper so many companies are currently allocating their budget to social media (Chen et al., 2022). Social media has content that can provide education to consumers. In the end, the activities carried out by marketers on social media will look very good and sincere in providing benefits to consumers.

This study also provides input for MSMEs, to be able to create entertaining social media and provide product-related information. For instance, when marketers sell baby clothing products, they might be able to provide information about how to raise children, and knowledge about child growth, so that consumers who visit their social media can take a long time to visit the social media. MSMEs can schedule a time to provide information content and time to sell on social media.

Marketers can also take advantage of services from social media providers to reach consumers quickly, namely paid ads such as Facebook ads, Instagram ads, Tiktok ads, and so on. It can help the message of the content delivered and quickly accepted by consumers, then increase the company's brand awareness. MSMEs can combine offline and online ways of marketing by utilizing social media to increase brand awareness and brand image which has implications for increasing sales.

This study has several limitations that can be used as a new way for future research on the same topic. First, respondents from Indonesia may have different results if they are applied to cultures in other countries and with different age groupings by cohort generation. Second, this study only focuses on customers with the experience of buying products in the form of goods (physical products). It may bring different results if the research objective is to examine the experience of buying products in the form of services. Third, for the research to get deeper results, further research can use a qualitative approach.

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