



## Viral Marketing Communication Concepts and Strategies: Changes in Consumer Behavior in the Era of Disruption

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### Abstract

Marketing has developed from marketing concept 1.0 to 4.0 so that to learn what consumers need and want, marketers must be able to have policies in using appropriate communication so that various information about products can be transferred to consumers. For this reason, it is necessary to better understand communication, especially marketing communication in terms of shaping consumer behavior. The purpose of this article is to provide insight into the field of viral marketing communications. This research methodology is a literature study from several journals that discuss viral marketing communications. The existence of communication can make it easier for someone to interact between one individual and another individual. Without communication there is no process of human life. This means that every human being needs communication to exchange ideas in order to realize what they want. Three main marketing shifts, characterized by product-driven marketing in the 1.0 era, then towards customer-centered marketing in the 2.0 era. Human-centered marketing exists in the 3.0 era. On the other hand, marketing communication tools can include advertising, sales force, signage, shops, displays, product packaging, free product samples, coupons, gifts and others. As for changes in consumer behavior that are increasingly developing, the impact of marketing 4.0 also results in viral marketing through social media networks such as E-commerce, (Tokopedia, Shoppe, Lazada, etc.), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, enabling continuous two-way interactivity from anywhere and anytime.

**Keywords:** *Consumer Behavior, Marketing Communication, Viral Marketing.*

### INTRODUCTION

The increasing competing interest of marketers in understanding consumer behavior has become a central issue and one of the most challenging and interesting areas of research (Gupta 2016, 225). Mohir, Webb, and Harris, (2001), suggest that a central question for business historically has been whether corporate decision makers should be concerned with issues other than corporate profits alone. Company management must really have a business strategy to achieve company goals properly and correctly. Marketing is an overall system of business activities aimed at planning, determining prices, promoting and distributing goods and services that satisfy the needs of both existing and potential buyers (Swastha and Irawan 2008, 5). Marketing is part of the spearhead that makes a company achieve success or failure. Marketing managers have the main task, namely selling products or services from a company that has a target market as determined by the company. Marketing has a role and journey that has evolved from marketing 1.0 to the concept of marketing 4.0.

It is also important to know that consumers are the central point of marketing attention, so learning what

consumers need and want is very important. Understanding consumers will guide marketers towards appropriate marketing policies, and through communication, various information about products can be transferred to consumers. For this reason, a deeper understanding of communication is needed, especially marketing communication in relation to shaping consumer behavior. The existence of interaction between one party and another party usually establishes communication. Communication can be carried out by various parties and groups, regardless of age or gender.

As a marketer, you should know the wants and needs of consumers from various aspects, namely perception, lifestyle, attitudes, culture, social class, reference groups, family and communication. Information received by consumers through communication plays an important role in being absorbed by marketers in understanding marketing communication strategies and concepts through consumer behavior. Marketing communications are a means that companies use to inform, persuade, and remind consumers directly or indirectly about the products and brands they sell (Kotler & Keller 2016, p.



580). The public support for integrated marketing communications believes that its emergence is more likely to be in the media context such as digital TV and cell phones, as well as the market environment, namely increasing global competition and rapid technological developments (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010).

Basically, people buy a product because of necessity. This can be caused internally and also by external environmental factors. The emergence of interest will encourage someone to search for information quickly and accurately, such as via the internet, which is currently booming among the millennial generation.

Based on data, HootSuite reports that of the 274.9 million population in Indonesia, 170 million people are active social media users. In the sense that 61.8% of the total population of Indonesia are social media actors. Meanwhile, 202.6 million people have active internet access throughout 2021. HootSuite data also states that the average Indonesian population spends 8 hours 52 minutes using the internet every day, with the most time being used to access social media, namely 3 hours 45 minutes. The most widely accessed social media are YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook.

This identification confirms that in the future Indonesia will become one of the potential markets for the digital economy, because almost all aspects of life today involve the internet, including the use of social media. So it is not wrong if The Guardian's research states that there has been a surge in social media advertising revenue. If we refer to Facebook's advertising revenue in the first quarter of 2017, it jumped 51% to US\$ 7.86 billion or higher than initial expectations of US\$ 7.68 billion. This is slightly different from Twitter, which is experiencing a decline in advertising revenue of 11% to US\$ 474 million and recorded a loss of US\$ 62 million. The description of the increase in Facebook and Twitter advertising increasingly shows the importance of social media in building a digital business ecosystem.

On the other hand, based on data obtained from the Communication and Information Service, it is known that in Indonesia 78% of electronic commerce (e-commerce) users are the highest in the world. Ages 15 – 19 years really like surfing the internet. Regarding Facebook users, Indonesia is in 4th position in the world. This is what underlies this research is the proliferation of new or viral businesses called startup

businesses whose segmentation targets young millennials. This can be linked to a shift in lifestyle where they really like hanging out in cafes while playing on their smartphones. Because of this, it is not uncommon to find cafes always busy, not only on weekends but also on weekdays

The phenomenon of high social media users has given rise to communicator actors who have influence and can build a positive image such as the role of Buzzer and Influencer. These two important actors will really determine the success of digital marketing, including efforts to promote potential, including various products and services at the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) level. However, digital marketing techniques certainly cannot run systematically without being supported by creative content, so one of the important things in digital marketing is preparing content that is interesting, innovative and creative. Creative content can make social media users interested in always following the product information displayed. This means that creative content is part of a creative campaign that can build a participatory culture in digital society.

This article is a literature review which aims to find the concept and use of viral marketing as a strategy in marketing via social media. Regarding changes in consumer behavior towards the era of disruption. For this purpose, a new marketing approach is needed to help marketers anticipate and manage the impact of disruptive technology. Therefore, marketing communication concepts and strategies in relation to understanding consumer behavior towards this era of disruption really need to be reviewed in order to provide a broader understanding.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Understanding and Models of Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior is defined as the activities of individuals who are directly involved in obtaining and using goods and services, including the decision-making process in the preparation and determination of these activities (Dharmesta and Handoko 2016, 10) . Consumer behavior is also defined as the decision-making process and physical individual activities involved in the process of evaluating, obtaining, using, or being able to use goods and services (Loudon and Bitta, 1993). In fact, there is no generally recognized consumer behavior theory because each one has special



knowledge and can only be applied to different situations (Dharmesta and Handoko 2016, 27).

The main issue from a consumer behavior perspective is the extent to which the objects owned serve the function of defining and maintaining the consumer's self-concept or identity (Ball and Tasaki, 1992). It is also important for a marketer to understand that consumer behavior varies, because each individual has different characteristics. Every consumer certainly has needs and desires to satisfy themselves. Consumer needs are a gap or conflict experienced between a reality and the impulses that exist within oneself (Mangkunegara, 2015). In fulfilling a need that is desired by every consumer, there is definitely a feeling of disappointment that arises within oneself if a need cannot be fulfilled. However, in contrast, if these needs can be fulfilled, happy behavior and a sense of satisfaction will definitely emerge within oneself. In fulfilling needs, marketing management must determine the basic needs of consumers, while in fulfilling desires they must determine the basic wants of consumers (Dharmesta and Handoko 2016, 25).

The initial problem of marketing management studying consumer behavior models is to investigate the rationality of consumer behavior, in an effort to show that more consumers think they are happy with the information or communication provided by the product or seller regarding the goods that consumers want that is clear and detailed. So that it can be compared with other products. It can be concluded that consumer behavior is formed by the presence of stimuli provided from various aspects. There are several other factors that influence consumer behavior in making purchasing decisions.

The observation process itself consists of attention, stimulus ambiguity, and perceptual bias. Meanwhile, the learning process consists of motives, choosing criteria, brand understanding, attitudes, intentions, beliefs and satisfaction. When consumers purchase a product, they begin with an awareness of fulfilling their needs and desires. After that, if they are aware of the existence of needs and desires, consumers will look for information about the existence of the product they want. From the various information obtained, consumers select the available alternatives. After carrying out the selection process, using various criteria in the consumer's mind, one of the products will be purchased. By purchasing a particular product, the

consumer behavior process does not end because the consumer will carry out a post-purchase evaluation. This evaluation process will determine whether consumers are satisfied or not. If they are satisfied then there is the possibility of continuing to make purchases in the future, but if they are not satisfied, it is likely that in the future they will look again for various product information they need.

### **Understanding and Concepts of Viral Marketing**

Viral marketing according is a communication and distribution concept that relies on customers to spread products via electronic mail / email to other potential users in their social environment and to generate connections as well as to spread the product (Kaplan Adreas M (2011) states that for success a viral marketing must fulfill the following 3 criteria:

1. Media and people who act to convey the message being campaigned. This person must have a fairly broad and trusted social network and media that is easily accessible to everyone.
2. The message or invitation that will be campaigned is easy to remember and inspires people to follow it.
3. A supportive environment and the right time to launch a viral marketing program.

Viral marketing is a form of modern marketing strategy that promises the popularity of the product being marketed, by seeing the high interest of people who are always connected to an internet connection to access free features (which have actually been inserted with various kinds of links which are an application of viral marketing). Creative ideas are very necessary in this type of marketing because internet users are quite critical in sorting out which information is purely information and which is a business strategy.

Viral marketing is a marketing technique that utilizes electronic media to achieve a certain marketing goal which is carried out through a communication process that continuously reproduces itself. The working concept is similar to the reproduction of viruses, namely multiplying themselves, making this concept called Viral marketing. Viral marketing can be in the form of word of mouth marketing which is reinforced by marketing activities and the effects of social networks. Viral marketing is a marketing technique that tries to get someone to voluntarily convey marketing messages to others. Viral marketing, word of mouth marketing, buzz marketing or whatever



the term is, is probably one of the most effective marketing. In viral marketing, customers who are satisfied make marketing efforts. As a result, marketing efforts and costs incurred by the company are minimal (PK Kotler).

Viral marketing pioneered by Tim Draver and Steve Juvetson where they proposed it as a form of electronic communication through word of mouth. Apart from that, Kotler & Armstrong stated that viral marketing is a form of word of mouth marketing via the internet, by sending messages via e-mail or similar which is contagious from one friend to another.

The viral marketing pattern by Khaneja in an article entitled "Viral Marketing: A Magic Want to Success" which contains about the internet makes people like shopping online, through searching for information on Google and using social media such as Facebook, Skype to interact. Viral marketing consists of: customer recommendations, bulletins, networking strategies, communities, free offers, sweepstakes, lists of potential buyers, product reference lists, affiliate programs, and search engines. What companies need is consumer honesty in making purchasing decisions and providing recommendations to other consumers.

The key to the viral marketing technique is comments or discussions on consumer websites and recommendations to other consumers. They will connect potential consumers who will use goods or services and recommend them to other consumers. Loyal internet users will find it easier to make decisions because they get additional information and suggestions from other users.

### **Changes in Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior includes the decision-making process and activities carried out by consumers physically in obtaining use or obtaining goods and services for consumption (Loudon and Bitta, 1993). Consumer behavior is the actions, processes and social relationships carried out by individuals, groups and organizations in obtaining, using a product or other as a result of their experience with products, services and other sources (Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1979 in Mangkunegara, 2015). In studying consumer behavior, marketers do not just stop at consumer behavior alone but also need to link it to the marketing strategy they want to develop. A good marketing strategy is essentially based on what consumers want and need. Companies that are able to understand consumer

behavior want to gain large profits because they can develop appropriate marketing strategies that can provide better satisfaction compared to their competitors.

Environmental changes always occur continuously in the development process of a country, which directly or indirectly, will influence life and its economic system, marketing methods and human behavior (Dharmesta and Handoko 2016: 9). Many environmental changes have occurred to date and have resulted in various revolutions, both industrial and marketing revolutions which have also had various impacts. In this year 2019, many conveniences have occurred in the community. This convenience comes from very rapid technological advances and has an impact on human behavior as consumers (Upe, 2023). The impact of technological progress can also be seen from the novelty of products produced by highly innovative companies. For example, the rise of GoJek and Grab start-ups makes transportation easier for people.

With the impact of this industrial revolution, consumer behavior and tastes also show changes. Companies that live in a dynamic environment must always develop their marketing skills and abilities (Dharmesta and Handoko 2016: 9). A company that lives in a dynamic environment must always develop its marketing skills and abilities. As further stated by Dharmesta and Handoko (2016), changes in the environment which are also reflected in changes in consumer behavior mean that marketing management is required to always update its introduction to consumers, reassess their current needs, and also estimate consumer needs in the future.

Changes in consumer behavior in the marketing sector can also be proven by the many changes in the marketing communication system. In the current marketing 4.0 era, this is demonstrated by combining online interactions and offline interactions between companies and customers. Start-up companies that are developing and giving influence to the impact of marketing 4.0 with the emergence of Shopee, BukaLapak, Tokopedia, Blibli and others. Many entrepreneurs have succeeded by selling online through these start-ups. Currently, many online media users feel the ease of shopping. Although the risks that arise certainly cannot be avoided. The convenience felt by consumers by shopping online is also inseparable from



the marketing communications provided by the company so that it reaches consumers, even though they do not interact directly to meet them, a marketer must be able to understand how consumers as online users can still receive satisfactory service and not much different from consumers who buy goods at outlets or using an offline system.

### **Era of Disruption**

The word disruption has become very popular because it is in line with the emergence and development of information technology applications and changing the form of ordinary entrepreneurship into start-ups (Kasali 2008: 149). Three main marketing shifts, marked by product-driven marketing in marketing 1.0 then towards customer - centric marketing in marketing 2.0, then human-centric marketing in marketing 3.0. Recently, many academics have discussed the marketing revolution 4.0 which is in line with the presence of the industrial revolution 4.0 (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2016). This marketing revolution is a marketing approach that combines online interactions and offline interactions between companies and customers.

Consumer behavior in the digital era is a marketing approach that combines interactions between online and offline. This means that brands not only prioritize good branding, but also content that is relevant to customers. Much research has been the subject of research in recent years on consumer behavior in the digital age, but understanding it is complicated by the fact that the main entities involved, consumers and businesses, have changed. First, every consumer is now also a computer user. Online consumers perform all the functions of traditional consumers on a computer while interacting with a system, namely a commercial website. According to Koufaris (2014), therefore, they also exhibit all the characteristics of computer users. Second, physical stores have been transformed into virtual stores through information technology (IT). In the physical commercial world, the IT used for operations remains largely in the background, invisible to consumers. However, in e-commerce, technology has moved to the foreground and has become as much a store in itself as a website (Koufaris, 2014).

### **DISCUSSION**

Changes in Consumer Behavior towards the Era of Disruption Purchase interest is the main link in stimulating communication and relationships between individuals and individuals. Many hobbies center on products or services, such as collecting antiques, modifying motor vehicles, and decorating rooms. A company offering hobby-related goods serves as a focal point for people with similar interests to interact (Tauber, 1972). The decision to shop will occur when a person's need for a particular item becomes too strong for him to allocate time, money, and effort to visit a site or store.

The marketing concept 1.0 which introduces product-based marketing is a central part of service marketing based on the fact that service consumption is process consumption rather than result consumption, where consumers or users consider the production process as part of service consumption, not just the result of that process as in traditional marketing of physical goods (Grönroos, 1998). When companies still monopolize the market, being the sole producer for all consumers, their focus is only on the efficiency of the production process. The company's main attention is focused on product development. The role of marketing communications in consumer behavior in the marketing 1.0 era is more about offering the quality of the product itself. For example, an insurance company offers its products through direct marketing carried out by its sales agents. When you have the opportunity to meet, here the sales agent will provide information about products that are tailored to the customer's budget and needs, as well as about the strengths and advantages of the product and company, placement of consumer funds, risks and so on so that consumers who may initially be anti-insurance because of poor communication It's good to start opening up, even though there may not be immediate marketing or sales, but once the consumer finds out, it's likely that he will be more interested, and will ultimately use the insurance. Apart from that, through advertising broadcasts that always flood television, it also acts as a medium for promotion for the company. The duration of the advertisement is very short, therefore it usually only contains the advantages of the product, and with an attractive advertisement appearance, consumers will usually be persuaded to make a purchase. Especially consumers at the age of children are easily influenced



by advertising. The stimulus for understanding consumer behavior in this era uses a truly intense approach to end in purchasing decisions.

Moving towards marketing revolution 2.0 which is characterized by customer-based marketing using integrated marketing communications. Integrated marketing communications is the process of strategically developing and controlling or influencing all messages used to build and maintain relationships with customers and other stakeholders (Duncan, 1993 in Hutton, 1996). This integrated marketing communication is also not far from innovative industrial developments. Integration is an effort to present a consistent message across all available marketing mix elements and has always been important for successful organizations even during the mid-twentieth century (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010). The rapid development of technology can influence integrated marketing communications from two sides, namely from a marketing and consumer perspective. Today, integration is necessary because of globalization and the resulting interdependence between countries and markets. The communication designed should ideally be integrated with other marketing mix strategies formulated by the company. Marketing communications will be successful if supported by product strategy, pricing strategy and distribution strategy that are consistent with the impression to be formed. If the message conveyed is that this product has high quality, then the product must also really have high quality, not be sold anywhere, so that consumers do not feel lied to, if consumers already believe then they will consume the product. With an integrated marketing communication process, interaction with consumers in the marketing 2.0 era leads to a one-to-one relationship.

The development of marketing 3.0, which is characterized by human-based marketing, has a value perspective on functional benefits, emotional benefits and social benefits. Marketers must be able to create positive changes in the eyes of consumers, and companies can interpret the company's vision, mission and values in creating products so that they reach consumers and can be accepted by the market. In this era, companies must also know that the market they are looking at has entered the category of consumers who have an intact mind, heart and spirit. This human-based marketing has the role of marketing communications

with the aim of differentiating the products offered by the company from other products. Product differentiation is also related to positioning. Efforts to differentiate these products are carried out by communicating to consumers about product differences, which can be in terms of physical, content, composition, price, and so on. Through a marketing communication process that aims to differentiate the products to be offered, interaction with consumers in the marketing 3.0 era leads to many-to-many collaboration.

Marketing developments entering the marketing 4.0 era are evidenced by rapid technological changes and the emergence of online or offline combinations as well as machine to machine, artificial intelligence, and full IoT support. Today's marketers and consumers are expanding their communications through dynamic new media called social networks. Marketing communication with promotions is the most effective on social media, because in this digital era marketing is based on social goals, the majority of consumers are more interested in searching for information via their respective smartphones. Promotion via social media is currently in great demand by companies that are looking for their market online, including Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube, and so on. Social media has amplified the power of consumer-to-consumer conversations in the marketplace by allowing one person to communicate with hundreds or thousands of other consumers quickly and with little effort. However, managers cannot directly control this process, on the other hand, in the marketing 4.0 era, many users enjoy shopping online via E-Commerce or smartphones. Managers must understand how consumers behave in the current digital era (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). This is the latest development in advertising products and communicating with consumers. According to Akar and Topcu (2011), E-Commerce (Facebook) is one of the fastest growing social media, which includes enormous spontaneous brainstorming among members of its network to develop opinions. In fact, powerful social media platforms have created exemplary scope for any brand to advertise its products through exposure, attention and perception; to develop opinions; and to create values (Kim and Ko, 2012).

The use of one-way (traditional) communication to promote consumer perceptions and increase positive



attitudes towards product value has dramatically lost its persuasive influence due to the widespread appeal of Facebook as a connection method for peers (Akar and Topcu, 2011). Today product assessment, evaluation and perception and the final attitude development process have drastically aligned with new patterns of multidimensional communication where consumers are more interested and find more credibility through pursuing and streamlining peer opinions rather than obtaining traditional marketing advertisements (Algharabat, AlAlwan, Rana, and Dwivedi, 2017). Koufaris (2014) revealed that emotional and cognitive responses to the web shopping experience can influence online consumer behavior, especially intention to return and unplanned purchases for new customers. Viewing online consumers as both shoppers and computer users, by combining theoretical paradigms from psychology, marketing, and information systems, we confirm the dual nature of online consumers as traditional shoppers and computer users. Research results show that the enjoyment of the shopping experience (psychological or marketing variables) and the perceived usefulness of the website are important for new customers' intention to return (Koufaris, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

The marketing communication concept Viral Marketing is a form of communication that aims to strengthen marketing strategies, in order to achieve wider segmentation. This article can also be said to be an effort to strengthen customer loyalty towards products, namely goods and services owned by the company. What a marketer needs to understand is that the success of a marketing communications strategy can be measured by how much sales of a product or income from the use of services by consumers.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that without communication, consumers and society as a whole will not know about the existence of products on the market, if they do not know how they will possibly make a purchase. On the other hand, with communication, where the producer or company will choose what media to use, how to package the message about the product and company, who the target is and who will be the resource person when informing about the product, all things related to marketing will become more effective, If marketing is right on target, of course

the expected consumer behavior will be realized. In order to have a high level of loyalty in forming consumer attitudes and behavior, the message characteristics must be stronger by strengthening the brand image and producer image.

On the other hand, marketing communication tools can include advertising, sales force, signage, shops, displays, product packaging, free product samples, coupons, giveaways and others. As for changes in consumer behavior that are increasingly developing, the impact of marketing 4.0 also results in viral marketing through social media networks such as E-commerce, (Tokopedia, Shoppe, Lazada, etc., Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, enabling continuous two-way interactivity from anywhere and anytime. Currently it is treated as a powerful and ubiquitous alternative channel for providing information. Apart from that, viral marketing can also be done through micro influencers which are currently widely used by small and medium businesses to promote their products in the market through. via social media because the majority of the market is currently occupied by the millennial generation and generation Z who are very advanced in technology.

The content of a message in marketing greatly influences consumers in evaluating a product. Therefore, communicators must be able to create effective messages. Ideally the message should attract attention, generate interest, trigger desire, and encourage people to buy the product. The need to understand changes in consumer behavior towards this era of disruption is also the main topic needed by a marketer to be able to keep up with the very diverse rhythm of consumer change.

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