

HOW DOES TOKOPEDIA USE TIKTOK PLATFORM TO ENHANCE ITS MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?

Aqila Nurkhaliza¹ & Uljanatunnisa²

^{1,2}Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia

aqilanurkhaliza13@gmail.com uljanatunnisa@upnvj.ac.id

Abstract : This study aims to analyze the use of Tokopedia's mascot as a marketing communication strategy by applying the SOSTAC concept. To obtain the necessary data, the researcher employed a qualitative research method through observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that the use of Toped as a mascot on Tokopedia's TikTok effectively increased brand awareness, strengthened organic interactions between the brand and consumers, reinforced Tokopedia's brand identity through the visualization of Toped, and the unique content themes with Toped as the main character have enhanced Tokopedia's brand recall.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, TikTok, Tokopedia, Toped, Mascot.

INTRODUCTION

In the current digital era, social media has emerged as a pivotal platform for businesses to engage with their target audiences. This medium offers companies an effective space to create creative and innovative content that captures the attention of potential consumers. As a result, many organizations utilize social media strategies as a key marketing tool to achieve goals such as brand awareness, audience growth, and improved consumer engagement.

Figure 1.1 Number of Social Media Users in 2023



Source: We Are Social.com

According to a report by We Are Social, the number of active social media users in 2023 is projected to reach 59.4% of the global population,

equating to approximately 4.76 billion individuals. This indicates that almost all people in the world are active on social media and this situation could be beneficial for companies to strengthen their communication strategies with their target audience. Social media encompasses a wide range of platforms, each with unique audiences and functions. Among the most popular platforms is TikTok, a short video application from China.

Since 2018, TikTok has emerged as an effective and efficient platform for advertising and information dissemination (Novita et al., 2023). TikTok has also proven to be a digital marketing tool in Indonesia that can enhance connections and engagement between companies and their audiences (Krisdanu and Sumantri, 2023). Furthermore, implicit marketing communication on the TikTok platform significantly impacts brand awareness and brand recall, as well as encourages purchase intentions among audiences, especially millennials (Gesundo et al, 2022). Recognizing this potential, business professionals and company owners have increasingly expanded their marketing efforts on the TikTok platform. Tokopedia, one of Indonesia's largest e-commerce companies, is among those leveraging TikTok to enhance brand engagement and reach

Tokopedia has gained recognition for its viral content on TikTok, largely through its mascot, 'Toped.' This character—a bright green shopping bag with an owl face—was introduced as a key element of Tokopedia's TikTok branding strategy. Released in a 3D format in mid-2023, Toped effectively represents Tokopedia's identity as both a leading e-commerce platform and an engaging, approachable shopping companion within social media spaces.

Figure 1. 2 Toped Mascots in Tokopedia TikTok Content



Source: Facebook.com/Tokopedia

The presence of the Toped mascot on Tokopedia's TikTok account introduces a refreshed, dynamic approach to the platform's social media strategy. Content featuring Toped incorporates themes popular among social media users, particularly Generation Z, including K-pop, anime, manhwa, and other viral trends prevalent in Indonesia. Furthermore, Tokopedia's Toped-

centered content often addresses niche topics that, while not widely recognized by the general public, resonate deeply within specific communities or niches. TikTok has a format that the more original content is in referring to a niche, the greater the impact for creators. Objectively, the use of Toped in Tokopedia's Tik Tok content is considered very beneficial for Tokopedia because the mascot itself can represent the emotions, thoughts, and characteristics of the brand, providing a tangible visualization to interact with the audience. As a visual identity component, incorporating a brand mascot into a marketing strategy fosters an active role for the brand, creating a 'live' impression in its marketing communication activities.

This is what makes TikTok Tokopedia's content slightly different from brand content and makes Tokopedia has succeeded in combining visual identity components to be implemented in its marketing communication strategy activities on social media. With this new content concept, Tokopedia has been named one of the winners in the Most Engaging Brand on Media Social for E-commerce category and the Most Engaging Content on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok for E commerce category at the 2024 Seluler Awards.

In the contemporary business landscape, company and brand owners are continuously innovating their marketing approaches to captivate target audiences, employing experimentation and adaptation to keep pace with shifting consumer trends. Such efforts aim to identify the most effective strategies for securing a competitive advantage. The evolution of modern marketing further emphasizes sustained, interactive relationships between companies and consumers that extend beyond transactional exchanges. As a result, brands must continuously engage and develop marketing communication strategy concepts that are creative, innovative, adaptable, and capable of capturing consumer attention. The use of the 'Toped' mascot by Tokopedia on TikTok serves as an example of this effort.

Today's digital era, marketing communication strategies have become crucial for companies to effectively reach their target markets, leading to an increase in research on this topic. One such study focuses on the use of social media marketing strategies by English football clubs, which leverage social media to expand their global reach and maximize the exposure of the Premier League (EPL) worldwide (McCarthy et al., 2022). Additionally, there is research exploring the use of YouTube as a marketing communication platform to enhance brand awareness, brand image, and purchase intentions among millennials (Febriyanto, 2020). Meanwhile, Tiktok in Marketing Communication has also been widely conducted For Example Beyond Individualized Responsibility Attributions? How Eco Influencers Communicate Sustainability on TikTok (Hubber et al, 2022), Comparing E-Commerce Micro- and Macroinfluencers in TikTok Videos: Effects of Strategies on Audience Likes, Audience Shares, and Brand Sales (Chan et al., 2023). Several studies on marketing communication strategies and TikTok in marketing communication have been conducted using quantitative research

methods. However, this study focuses on a qualitative approach, which indirectly provides novelty through the methodology used. This study aims to analyze and describe Tokopedia's marketing communication strategy on TikTok, focusing on how the brand leverages the Toped mascot to engage users and strengthen brand affinity.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Marketing Communication Strategy

According to Prayitno and Harjanto (2017) there are fundamental strategies to support marketing communication activities, which include:

- a. Strategy for audiences determining target : The target audience determination strategy emphasizes gaining a comprehensive understanding of the target market, which is then developed and implemented in the planning of marketing communications.
- b. Message development strategy : The message development strategy consists of two stages; determining the core message and message penetration. In determining the core message, marketing data analysis uses external and internal data, usually using a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) approach. And the message penetration stage involves two general approaches: approach and appeal. The approach involves developing the desired product positioning, crafting a product image, and emphasizing the product's advantages and uniqueness. Additionally, when determining message appeal, it is essential to consider whether to employ a rational, emotional, or combined approach to ensure the message is effectively received and achieves optimal impact.
- c. Media selection strategy: When determining a media strategy, it is essential for a brand or company to select media types that are effective, efficient, and user-friendly. Additionally, it is crucial to choose interactive media that the target audience is familiar with and accustomed to, ensuring seamless communication between the brand and its audience.
- d. Marketing strategy: Consisting communication of advertising, element sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing. And these marketing communication elements can be divided into two categories: soft selling and hard-selling.
- e. Budget strategy: The marketing communications budget is the allocation of funds for a campaign period. Typically, this budget is set in conjunction with other budgets based on logical considerations and top management's sense of the best combination of maximize profits.

TikTok

Social media has become a vital platform in the evolution of new media, distinguished by its internet-based structure that enables rapid, open, and interactive communication. Unlike traditional media, social media allows users to effortlessly create, share, and access content anytime, anywhere. With continuous technological advancements, social media now plays a central role in diverse areas such as marketing, communication, education, and social activism. Its versatility and accessibility establish it as a leading medium in today's digital landscape. Platforms like TikTok have also emerged as dynamic examples of new media, delivering information through engaging, video-based content.

TikTok is a software application or platform based on short music videos that presents creative entertainment content. This platform gives users the opportunity to create videos of short duration, namely 15 seconds or longer duration, namely 10 minutes, combined with various features, music and special effects that can be collaborated on. And TikTok also shares similarities with other popular social media, such as Instagram and Facebook, TikTok allows creator live streaming.

However, TikTok has their own 'characteristics' different with other, there is the prevalence or 'the algorithm'. On TikTok, unlike on other platforms, the user experience is obviously, unambiguously, and explicitly driven by what is commonly called the "For You" algorithm (Xu et al., 2019). Of the major social media platforms on the market, TikTok is the only one to position its algorithm at the center of the social experience it engenders; the algorithm determines the type of video content the user is exposed to, and viewing this content makes up the majority of the experience on the platform [Bhandari and Bimo, 2022]

And currently, the TikTok platform is currently widely used as a medium for disseminating content containing information about a brand, promotional media, or a medium for interacting with consumers. In 2020 there is a phenomenon where TikTok has become a digital-based marketing media that markets a product through creative and interesting content for consumers (Lahus et al., 2023).

Brand Identity: Mascot

A mascot is a form of brand identity that can encompass images of humans, animals, or objects believed to bring good luck or represent a group with a common identity, such as an organization or product (Caufield in Rahmadini, 2023). Mascots are integral elements of a company's brand identity, working in conjunction with other brand identity components. When combined with a name, logo, and jingle, the use of a brand mascot becomes even more compelling to consumers.

Brand mascots are visually and personally adaptable, often incorporating human traits that make them appear as living characters

capable of socializing like humans. This adaptability drives many brands to use mascots as representatives for interacting with the public.

SOSTAC Concept

Concept SOSTAC is a marketing planning framework model to identify the main things that need to be done by a company or brand in carrying out structured marketing activities. According to Chaffey (2015), the SOSTAC framework consists of six stages of the analysis process, namely:

- a. Situation analysis: is the first step in a marketing plan. Situation analysis is placed at the beginning of planning because it is useful for knowing the picture of internal and external assessing what steps are suitable to be taken.
- b. Objective: objective is the stage after understanding the situation and then focusing and determining a marketing activity plan.
- c. Strategy: Strategy is a long-term plan regarding what steps the company wants to take in achieving its marketing goals.
- d. Tactics: Tactics are the stages in taking specific and detailed steps to be carried out by the company. The tactics taken must be flexible and short-term oriented so that the steps taken can be adapted to any situation.
- e. Action: Action is a form of application of planned tactics, including operational details, in the form of scheduling, budget allocation, and management of what activities will be carried out.
- f. Control: Control is the activity of monitoring, measuring performance and evaluating performance based on predetermined goals.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology within a constructivist paradigm, utilizing a case study approach to facilitate a comprehensive examination of the research phenomenon. The focus of this investigation is Tokopedia's marketing communication strategy on TikTok, with particular emphasis on the use of the Toped mascot in TikTok content.

Data collection involved two main sources: primary data, gathered through in-depth interviews, and secondary data, acquired through observation and documentation. To collect primary data, purposive sampling was used to ensure relevance and depth, selecting informants from Tokopedia's social media team who possess knowledge and involvement in the development of Tokopedia's TikTok content. To ensure data validity and reliability, credibility was established using techniques such as source triangulation, divergence analysis, and member-checking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A. TikTok Tokopedia and Mascot Toped

The Tokopedia TikTok account was established in 2019, but the initial introduction and publication of the Toped mascot occurred in mid-2023, marked by the release of content specifically designed to introduce the mascot to the audience.

Figure 3.1 Toped Mascot in Tokopedia TikTok Content



Source: TikTok.com/Tokopedia

The incorporation of the Toped mascot as the central character in Tokopedia's TikTok content has enabled the brand to present a distinctive and unique persona. Currently, Tokopedia has reached a total of 111.5 million likes and 11.4 million followers with around 3000 pieces of content shared. Based on the results of analysis of the Tokopedia TikTok account via hypeauditor4, the engagement rate obtained by the Tokopedia TikTok account in 202 was 9.95% with an average number of likes per video of 13.9 thousand and was included in the best category.

B. Marketing Communication Strategy of Tokopedia on TikTok

Tokopedia's marketing communication strategy on TikTok involves leveraging a content approach that differentiates itself from typical brand content. Following a rebranding effort in mid-2023, which coincided with the introduction of the Toped mascot, Tokopedia shifted to a slightly unconventional content concept known as "shitposting." This strategy diverges from traditional promotional or hard-sell tactics, instead focusing on creating humorous and engaging content akin to typical TikTok fare. According to sources, this content approach was designed to align with the interests of Tokopedia's target audience, primarily Generation Z. By adopting this strategy, Tokopedia aims to establish itself as a brand that resonates with its audience,

addresses their daily needs, and engages with them in a manner that fosters connection. The formulation of Tokopedia's marketing communications strategy on TikTok involves the following steps:

1. **Target Strategy:** Audience Determination Interviews reveal that Tokopedia has effectively identified and understood its target audience on TikTok since the platform's initial use. At the outset, Tokopedia recognized that the majority of TikTok users were Generation Z. Over time, Tokopedia has analyzed consumer behaviour on TikTok and found that their target audience consists of internet-savvy individuals with an affinity for digital content. Demographically, Tokopedia's TikTok audience is segmented into two primary layers: Generation Z, and to a lesser extent, Generation Alpha and Millennials, with a predominant female demographic.
2. **Message Determination:** Strategy Tokopedia crafts its TikTok messages based on research into follower preferences and insights gathered from audience interactions in the comments section. This information is further analyzed during team brainstorming sessions to develop content with an emotional appeal, using the Toped mascot as a means of emotional visualization.
3. **Media Selection:** Strategy As a leading e-commerce brand in Indonesia, Tokopedia employs a range of media channels for its marketing communications. The Tokopedia social media team selected TikTok due to its effective potential for information dissemination. Despite acknowledging a delayed entry into TikTok, the team has since developed an effective content strategy that resonates with the audience. The team is committed to continuously evolving their TikTok content strategy in conjunction with the Toped mascot.
4. **Communication Element:** Strategy Tokopedia's TikTok content integrates both promotional and brand value elements in an engaging manner. The content not only emphasizes product value but also reinforces brand value, blending hard-selling and soft selling techniques with entertaining elements. This approach allows Tokopedia to market products in a more enjoyable and effective manner.
5. **Budget Strategy** Tokopedia allocates a substantial budget for its TikTok content creation. Initially, this budget supported extensive experimentation, including collaborations with influencers, paid media, and large-scale events. Currently, the budget is focused on enhancing the efficiency of the content strategy to better engage the audience.

Discussion

Utilizing the SOSTAC framework, this study analyzes the stages of the SOSTAC model in implementing Tokopedia's marketing communication strategy on TikTok, with a particular focus on the use of the Toped mascot. The analysis is described as follows:

1. **Situational Analysis:** Tokopedia's consumer analysis on TikTok revealed that their audience is characterized by expressive behaviour, frequent social media browsing, and a strong reliance on online platforms, traits that are reflective of Generation Z. These insights influenced the development of the Toped mascot's character. Additionally, Tokopedia conducted a competitor analysis on TikTok to identify gaps in strategies and content that had not been utilized by other e-commerce brands. This research led to the adoption of a unique Toped mascot strategy, distinguishing Tokopedia's TikTok content from that of other brands.
2. **Objective:** Tokopedia employs the Toped mascot to achieve several objectives: enhancing brand transforming the awareness, interaction style between Tokopedia and its audience to foster a peer-like relationship, and differentiating itself from other brands. The Toped mascot is also designed to convey a message of fostering brand affinity towards both the mascot and Tokopedia.
3. **Strategy:** Tokopedia's social media marketing strategy involving the Toped mascot includes: Conducting thorough and ongoing research into audience characteristics and behaviour. Managing communication and interaction between the Toped mascot and TikTok users, creating a friendly, peer-like relationship. Developing a recognizable and likable character for the Toped mascot.
4. **Tactics:** Toped mascot in its TikTok content: - Continuously staying updated on trends and audience interests related to Toped. - Maintaining consistency in the Toped mascot's character to ensure sustained audience engagement, adhering to predefined roles as Tokopedia's brand awareness driver on TikTok. - Guiding the mascot's interactions with the audience in the comments section according to established communication guidelines.
5. **Action:** This stage involves detailing the process of creating Tokopedia's TikTok content featuring the Toped mascot, including content scheduling, brainstorming, pre-production and post production activities, uploading, and content. Additionally, it encompasses how the Toped mascot engages with the audience in the comments section, aiming to present a friendly and expressive persona through the use of emoticons, slang, and responsive interactions to various comments.
6. **Controls** Tokopedia evaluates the effectiveness of the Toped mascot's integration into TikTok content by analyzes metrics such as impressions and engagement against predefined KPIs. The team also

employs the Share of Voice (SOV) strategy to monitor conversations and testimonials about the Toped mascot in their content.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study on Tokopedia's marketing communication strategies on TikTok, it can be concluded that Tokopedia focuses on creating content that aligns with the preferences of its followers, reflecting the company's broader marketing strategy to engage Generation Z as a key future audience. Through the playful and humorous Toped mascot, Tokopedia has established a more personal connection with its consumers. Tokopedia's TikTok content, which incorporates popular themes such as anime, K-pop, manhwa, and other trending topics, has effectively captured consumer attention and facilitated interaction, as evidenced by high engagement rates and organic growth.

The use of the Toped mascot as part of Tokopedia's marketing communication strategy has proven successful, as it aids in achieving key objectives like boosting brand awareness and fostering interaction between the brand and its consumers, demonstrated by consistently high engagement rates. Additionally, the visual representation of Toped reinforces Tokopedia's brand identity, providing an authentic reflection of the brand. Thus, Tokopedia's marketing strategy on TikTok, which centers on the Toped mascot, has been effectively implemented

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