E-WORD OF MOUTH BRAND BITTERSWEET BY NAJLA VIA TIKTOK

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Abstract
E-word of mouth is a new marketing communication strategy that has emerged with the rapid development of social media. The rapid growth of TikTok the implementation of this marketing communication strategy. This study aims to analyze the use of TikTok as a platform for Bittersweet by Najla to promote and create e-word of mouth. This research also seeks to analyze the cognitive process of Bittersweet by Najla consumers before making a purchase decision by employing the Elaboration Likelihood Model. The research methodology utilized a case study method by Robert K. Yin, offering a detailed overview of the e-word of mouth communication strategy used by Bittersweet by Najla. The chosen data analysis technique is pattern matching. The findings reveal that a consumer claimed to purchase Bittersweet by Najla products due to the influence of TikTok content and video reviews uploaded on TikTok. Consequently, it can be concluded that the e-word of mouth marketing communication strategy remains effective in this era, and TikTok can be considered a complementary application that supports the success of e-word of mouth marketing communication due to its high user base.

Keywords: Bittersweet by Najla, E-Word of Mouth, Marketing Communication Strategies, Promotional Content, TikTok

Abstrak

Kata Kunci: Bittersweet by Najla, E-Word of Mouth, Konten Promosi, Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran, TikTok
Introduction

Bittersweet by Najla is one of the pioneering dessert box brands. Najla, who is more familiarly called Ala, explained that the beginning of this brand was a fad, but the results of her innovation were praised by her family and supported by her friends. Initially, Najla only opened pre-orders (PO) for 30 boxes per day in only 1 outlet. However, nowadays, the demand for Bittersweet by Najla’s products is getting higher and higher, resulting in more and more outlets across Indonesia. Bittersweet by Najla is a brand that produces contemporary dessert boxes and several other types of cakes. Currently, the Bittersweet by Najla dessert box business is increasingly favored by many people, especially young people.

![Figure 1. TikTok Profile Page Bittersweet by Najla](TikTok Official Account Bittersweet by Najla, 2023)

Referring to the results of the researcher’s analysis, Bittersweet is quite aggressive in producing content on TikTok. The goal is to make other people interested in trying the product, aware of this product, and then create word of mouth. This strategy can be declared quite successful by Bittersweet because the demand for products is getting higher and more people are reviewing this brand on social media.

A brand has a different way of doing marketing communication. The existence of digitalization makes marketing activities easier through various new media (Kusuma & Sugandi, 2018). Marketing communication for each brand requires a form of communication media in accordance with the target audience to be achieved. Recently, businesspeople have been utilizing social networks in the marketing communication
process. This is based on the reason that by utilizing social networks, the marketing process will be much more effective and affordable (Rahastine, 2022).

Marketing communication is a method used by companies to inform, persuade, and maintain customer loyalty to the brands and products they buy (Firmansyah, 2020; Putranto & Vallejo, 2022). In marketing communication, there are two meanings, namely communication, which means the method by which ideas and understanding are shared between people or between organizations. Marketing means a series of actions taken by a business or other organization to exchange value with its clients regarding its products, services, and ideas (Firmansyah, 2020; Putranto, 2023).

In marketing, companies need a very large amount of money to promote their products. This makes companies look for alternatives that can be used to promote their products at a more affordable price than advertising in conventional media. There are other techniques that can be used to conduct promotional activities at an affordable price, namely alternative marketing programs. In alternative marketing programs, there are several advertising techniques that can be done, such as guerilla marketing, buzz marketing, experiential marketing, and product placement. Guerilla marketing is defined as low-cost marketing through marketing activities in non-traditional media. Guerilla marketing is a technique that is still widely used by brands. It is based on creativity, and one’s creativity is always growing and will not die. One form of communication that falls into guerilla marketing is buzz marketing (Situmorang, 2016).

Buzz marketing/word of mouth (WoM) is one of the marketing strategies in which a large number of consumers discuss a product or brand one after another because the product is considered to attract the attention of many people (Faiyah & Naufal, 2021). Buzz marketing is a promotional strategy concentrating on spreading messages quickly using technology, both in private chats and public forums on social media (Faiyah & Naufal, 2021). Buzz marketing strategies are included in word-of-mouth promotion because they both use technology, such as social media platforms and personal conversations that cause a product or event to go viral.

e-WoM is also defined as a marketing communication technique created by the audience to produce WoM effects via the internet (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In addition, e-WoM can also be defined as any statement made by potential consumers, consumers, and former consumers whether it is positive, neutral or negative regarding a product,
service, brand, or company that is shared through social media for many people to see (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013).

Many new promotional media have emerged that ultimately affect the way a brand conducts marketing communication. One of them is the TikTok platform, whose use has grown rapidly during the pandemic. Initially, TikTok was only used as an entertainment medium. However, in its development, TikTok was then used by many brands to carry out marketing communications (Dewa & Safitri, 2021). The current consumer trend is that many people are talking about brands on social media, which ultimately creates e-WoM.

There are eight dimensions that make up an electronic word of mouth, including the following (Castellano & Dutot, 2017). First, tie strength is the strength of the bond that refers to the size of the bond between members in a communication network. Second, homophily explains the frequency of an individual interacting with members in a communication network who have the same attributes. Third, trust is related to the willingness of a consumer to depend on a brand. Fourth is source credibility, which explains the high credibility of an e-WoM actor. This high credibility can improve the quality of a brand, reduce the level of perceived risk, and increase consumer confidence in the brand. Fifth, message quality related to message quality refers more to the overall style of a message. Sixth, content quality refers to the overall quality of the content that a brand produces. This includes the content’s accuracy, relevance, and persuasiveness. Brands that produce high-quality content are more likely to generate positive WoM. Seventh, valence refers to the positive or negative effect that WoM has on a brand’s image. Positive WoM can enhance a brand’s image, while negative WoM can damage it. Brands can influence the valence of WoM by carefully managing their content and their interactions with consumers. Eighth, degree of influence refers to the extent to which WoM persuades consumers to take action. This can be anything from making a purchase to simply learning more about a brand. Brands can increase the degree of influence of WoM by making sure that it is relevant to the target audience and that it provides clear calls to action.

The condition of the COVID-19 pandemic which is slowly starting to subside has made the intensity of the media in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic not so massive anymore. One of the new habits that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic is
cooking. Based on the Cookpad and Gallup survey summarized in the World Cooking Index report, Indonesia was recorded as the country that experienced the most drastic increase in cooking intensity among 116 countries at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. In 2019, Indonesians cooked around 6.2 times per week, while in 2020, the intensity of Indonesian’s cooking increased by 2.5 times per week, totaling 8.7 per week (Agmasari, 2022). This increase is motivated by the saturation that hit at the beginning of the pandemic when people’s mobility was completely restricted. Therefore, one of the activities that people do to overcome their boredom is cooking.

There are many new types of food that have gone viral during the pandemic. One of them is garlic bread and dalgona coffee. Just as happened with dalgona coffee, many people are competing in the garlic bread business. This garlic bread trend is growing rapidly along with the high audience for Korean dramas during the early days of the pandemic (Fitria, 2020). All trend developments that occurred during the pandemic are inseparable from the influence of the media, content creators, and influencers who produce content. At the beginning of the pandemic, TikTok social media became one of the social media that was booming in use.

Head of Content and User Operations TikTok Indonesia, Angga Anugrah Putra, explained that TikTok application users during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia have increased by 20%. With this increase, the content that gets the most views is educational content through the hashtag #samasamabelajar. Even so, cooking content, life hacks, language learning and others are also still watched by many users (Annur, 2020). Marketing communication after the COVID-19 pandemic is more directed toward the TikTok social media application because in the COVID-19 era, namely 2020, the TikTok platform developed rapidly. This makes social media activities more likely to use the application, and every marketing process that uses e-WoM techniques must switch aggressively to the TikTok application (Dewa & Safitri, 2021). The increasing number of TikTok users has caused the influence possessed by TikTok media to increase as well. Initially, the TikTok application was used only for sharing photos and videos with a duration of 15-60 seconds (Y. R. Dewi, 2021). However, over time, TikTok has finally changed its role to become one of the new channels of marketing communication, namely by sharing/producing content, one of which is the Bittersweet by Najla brand.
Brand Bittersweet by Najla uses marketing media in the form of Instagram or TikTok. This is because the number of users of the two platforms can be said to be quite high, so the effectiveness of conducting marketing communication activities is better than other platforms. The positive impact obtained from the seller is that sales profits are increasing, getting attention from more than the target audience, awareness of the store becomes wider and gaining trust from the audience who have seen it from the social media owned by the store. The negative impact of this marketing process is the imitation of creativity by other competitors (Rumyeni, 2016).

This theory states that each person has their own way of processing a persuasive message. There are people who judge a message without consideration of the underlying arguments, and there are also people who understand a message in detail and critically. In this theory, there are two ways that a person uses to process a message/information. The first way is by carrying the message through the central route, while the second way is to carry the message through the peripheral route (Littlejohn, 2012). In several previous studies, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) involving two routes has been carried out to see how voters make their political choices (Nurrahmi, 2017). In addition to ELM related to the research topic, the role of persuasive communication is also important in the consumer cognitive process. In fact, persuasive communication emphasizes the message delivered to the target public, starts with raising awareness, and focuses on changing the behavior (Rahmi et al., 2019).

Previous research states that e-WoM can increase the credibility of a brand. People become easier to trust, and the potential for someone to make a purchase increases if there is an e-WoM that is built. An e-WoM is said to be successful if there are many people who share the content that has been produced (Rochmana et al., 2022). e-WoM communication on Instagram has the potential to increase tourist loyalty (Nurhaipah, 2019), and the results of reviews from food bloggers are effective in developing culinary businesses (Shafira & Mutia, 2021). The similarities of the three previous studies are that they both use the concept of e-WoM. In addition, the three previous studies were also conducted with the aim of seeing how e-WoM is built through social media. The differences found from the three studies are the different approaches. Two previous studies used ethnographic methods in examining the unit of analysis. Meanwhile, other previous studies used phenomenological methods.
Based on this background, this research aims to provide further insight into the use of TikTok in carrying out e-word of mouth communication strategies. The findings of this study are expected to gather the data needed to explain the strategies related to e-word of mouth marketing through a case study of Bittersweet by Najla consumers. In addition, researchers also want to analyze the cognitive process that consumers go through before they finally decide to buy.

Method

This research uses the case study method, which is a research method that questions “why” and “how” to produce detailed and in-depth data (Yin, 2018). The case study method is considered capable of maintaining the holistic character of the various facts found in the field related to a case. The reason is that this method focuses on one event/case, so in-depth exploration is needed to find out the facts of the event/case to be researched (Yin, 2018). The type of case study used in this research is the descriptive case study type proposed by Robert K. Yin. This type was chosen in this study because it is in accordance with the objectives of the researcher, who wants to provide a detailed description of the marketing communication strategy of the Bittersweet by Najla brand.

Yin explains that data collection techniques with the case study method are generally obtained through six ways, namely documentation studies, interviews, archived records, direct observation, participatory observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). Based on the data source, data collection can be grouped into two parts, namely, primary data sources and secondary data sources (Sugiyono, 2018). Primary data in this study will be obtained using in-depth interviews. The reason is that this technique helps researchers find things in more detail about the behavior of participants and cases that are happening (Sugiyono, 2018). The type of interview that will be conducted in this research is a semi-structured interview conducted face-to-face, where the researcher will formulate several open questions as a reference in conducting the interview process, then the questions will be developed according to the answers given by the informant (Sugiyono, 2018).

Informants who became primary data sources in this study were active students of Universitas Multimedia Nusantara. In this study, researchers used purposive sampling techniques to select informants in accordance with the research objectives.
According to Sugiyono (2018), the purposive sampling technique is an informant selection technique based on certain criteria that have been compiled in accordance with the research objectives. Based on this description, the researcher chose 4 informants who best fit the criteria determined by the researcher.

The criteria for selecting informants in this study are male/female Multimedia Nusantara University students aged 18-19, familiar with Bittersweet by Najla products, and exposed to its TikTok promotional content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>On a daily basis, MA admits that she often buys Bittersweet by Najla products. The reason is because MA often sees Bittersweet by Najla’s promotional content on MA’s FYP TikTok. In addition, the tempting visual appearance also causes MA to be encouraged to purchase Bittersweet by Najla products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informant 1</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR has a fairly good product knowledge related to Bittersweet by Najla products and NR can be said to see Bittersweet by Najla marketing content on social media quite often, although the frequency of product purchases made is not very frequent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informant 2</td>
<td>JHS</td>
<td>JHS herself has never purchased Bittersweet by Najla products at all. However, because this product became very viral, JHS often saw this promotional content on her personal social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informant 3</td>
<td>DN</td>
<td>DN is a long-time customer of Bittersweet by Najla. Before this product went viral on social media, DN had bought Bittersweet by Najla products several times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meanwhile, secondary data is generally obtained through the process of reviewing documents, supporting photos, articles, third parties, and others (Sugiyono, 2018). Therefore, in this study, secondary data was obtained through Bittersweet by Najla’s social media activities, supporting articles and journals.

Data validity is the strength of qualitative research because good research has data that is trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher chose to use a construct validity test. The reason is that this type of test is in accordance with the research objectives to be achieved, namely knowing how each Bittersweet by Najla consumer’s perspective on the marketing communication strategy that has been built.

Data analysis is used to search for and reorganize interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials cumulatively to help further understand the subject/object under study (Auliya et al., 2020). The researcher analyzed the data that had been collected using the pattern-matching technique. This technique is done by comparing the initial predictions made by researchers in the form of assumptions, previous research, and previous studies with the facts obtained from the results of research conducted in the field (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Yin, 2018). The reason for this is that this research seeks to match various data that have been collected through the interview process and will look for a common thread to become the main point in explaining this research problem. This research uses data source triangulation which seeks to explore the truth of certain information through various methods and sources of data acquisition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

**Results and Discussion**

There are many marketing communication strategies that can be used on the TikTok platform, including using hashtags. Hashtag (#) is a symbol that is commonly used by content creators to make it easier for audiences to find similar content to the content they are currently viewing. The use of hashtags can also help to expand the reach of content. Second, following trends, third, collaborating with influencers, and fourth, increasing the frequency of posts (Dewa & Safitri, 2021). In addition, there are other strategies that brands can use to promote using the TikTok platform, namely
through e-WoM. In short, the e-WoM strategy is a strategy from brands to get consumers to talk about their products on social media.

Likewise, what happened to Bittersweet by Najla was that the brand was discussed by people on social media, which made consumers curious and want to try the product.

![Bittersweet by Najla Keyword Searches on TikTok, 2023](TikTok Official Account Bittersweet by Najla, 2023)

Based on Figure 2, most of the content that appears when searching for the keyword Bittersweet by Najla is review content from consumers. It can also be seen that the production of these contents is not just micro influencers, but some well-known influencers also provide reviews.

The interview results prove that informants get more information about Bittersweet by Najla through social media. This was confirmed by the research informants during the interview:

"Um, so the first time I knew about Bittersweet by Najla products was from social media, because it was trending too." (NR, interview, 8 May 2023)

"The first time I knew about Bittersweet by Najla products was from Instagram...” (MA, interview, 8 May 2023)

"Incidentally, at that time I bought the first one because I saw the photos posted on Instagram of Bittersweet by Najla like this....” (DN, interview, 8 May 2023).
From this statement, it can be concluded that the marketing communication strategy of the Bittersweet brand plays more on e-WoM. Through the free dessert box sharing content, it seeks to make people constantly comment and talk about this brand. This is supported by the informant’s statement that the purchase of Bittersweet by Najla products is mostly due to the influence of social media content created.

“For myself, it was because I saw it on Instagram like the photo was cool, I wanted to try it...” (MA, interview, 8 May 2023)

“The first time was actually because I was drooling over the content on Instagram and TikTok too...” (NR, interview, 08 May 2023)

“I bought it because I saw the photos posted on Bittersweet by Najla’s Instagram and it looked really good...” (DN, interview, 8 May 2023)

Some informants were also of the view that most of the e-WoM carried out came from various reviews made by third parties and uploaded on TikTok.

“Maybe the e-WoM strategy from Bittersweet by Najla is like reviews from people. Maybe it’s like she reviewed on TikTok, and the review is good and it can directly influence other people to buy Bittersweet by Najla.” (DN, interview, 8 May 2023)

“Like the lure that I give for free, like the ones on TikTok, I reply to people’s comments and then japri them with a video like I give for free this, this, this, so like e-WoM can reach FYP.” (MA, interview, 8 May 2023)

The Consumers’ Cognitive Process

Based on the elaboration likelihood model that has been explained previously, there are two cognitive processing routes that the recipient of a persuasive message goes through. First, the central route. This route explains that the recipient of a persuasive message is likely to process the message based on the various arguments and accurate information they receive when involved in persuasive communication. Second, the peripheral route. This route explains that the recipient of a persuasive message is likely to process the message from an emotional perspective, such as the visuals displayed and the emotions built during communication. (Chang et al., 2020).

Before making a purchase, consumers will generally make various considerations/thoughts before finally deciding to buy the product. For example, in terms of price, portion, distance, shipping, and others. This is also what some informants in this study did. Before they make a purchase, they will consider several factors:
“There are definitely several considerations, initially from the price, then like from that price what can I get, is it worth it not to spend that much money for that result etc. Then the location, then the variant, then maybe lastly the rating of people on the product....” (JHS, interview, 8 May 2023).

“The consideration is in terms of taste, whether the product suits the tongue or not.... after that, maybe there is in terms of promos too because the price of bittersweet for the size of a dessert box is quite expensive, so.” (NR, interview, 8 May 2023).

“From the price...” "If there is a promo....” (MA, interview, 8 May 2023).

“For consideration, maybe for me personally, the first thing is the price....” (DN, interview, 8 May 2023)

Informant NR considers the price side when making a purchase. This consideration is also made by the informant’s MA and DN. In addition, because the purchase of Bittersweet by Najla products is done entirely online, the promo aspect is also an important aspect for informants in making purchases of Bittersweet by Najla products. These considerations also apply to consumers who have never made a purchase. Informant JHS explained that he would still consider reviews/ratings, prices, and promos before making a purchase.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the cognitive process that consumers go through before making a purchase is to determine the price range - look for existing promos - pay attention to ratings/reviews from third parties - buy.

**e-WoM Marketing Communication Strategy**

e-WoM can be defined as a marketing communication technique created by the audience to generate a WoM effect through the internet with the purpose of marketing a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In addition, e-WoM can also be defined as any statements made by potential consumers, consumers, and former consumers, whether positive, neutral, or negative, regarding products, services, brands, or companies that are shared through social media so that they can be seen by many people (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013). e-WoM has the same communication process as general communication. In building its marketing communication, e-WoM involves a communicator (the individual who creates the communication message), a medium (the means of conveying the message), and a receiver (the individual who receives and responds to the communication message).
In running a business, especially an online business, a marketing communication strategy is needed to increase sales, as done by the Bittersweet by Najla brand. Bittersweet by Najla uses e-word of mouth marketing communication strategy as one of the strategies to increase its sales (S. T. Dewi et al., 2022). The e-word of mouth marketing communication strategy carried out by Bittersweet by Najla makes consumers continuously monitor (in other words, “sticky” with Bittersweet by Najla) the promotional content carried out by them through Bittersweet by Najla’s social media.

Every content that brings up Kak Ala as one of Bittersweet by Najla’s content models eventually raises the question, “How does the public view Kak Ala through the uploaded content, and what are the characteristics of Kak Ala in the content?” Every interaction carried out by Kak Ala in the Bittersweet by Najla content can actually bring out a picture of how she wants to be seen by the public.

The first informant in this study said that Bittersweet by Najla has a persuasive marketing communication strategy, and they brand their products and like to share free products with followers who have commented through the comment column.

“I think it’s persuasive communication that invites you to buy it while putting branding about the product like ehm this is good lo, like a lot of chocolate, good taste, lots of variants, then there are also promotions like it’s cheaper, then he is also like on TikTok or Instagram, I’ve seen him reply to people’s comments and then you can get free products from him, like a lot of people comment also for engagement from his bittersweet products.” (JHS, interview, 8 May 2023)

Meanwhile, the second informant saw that the e-word of mouth marketing communication strategy carried out by Bittersweet by Najla was quite effective. The content produced by Bittersweet by Najla itself is able to provide answers to all kinds of difficulties experienced by consumers. Every time there is an issue that occurs, the issue can be resolved quickly, and they can immediately prepare clarifications and immediately find solutions to the issue.

“Okay, this means, the e-WoM marketing strategy, so if the ehm that has been going through your social media, I feel that the effective way they do it is by finding real evidence, in addition to explaining, clarifying things that are rumors circulating in the community, for example, the one about the chocolate being small, or the packaging that is easily damaged, it was trending too, now the party from bittersweet’s social media, bittersweet, immediately made a video that clarified the statement and then immediately told the solution too, then he also showed a visualization of the product.” (NRS, interview, 8 May 2023).
The third and fourth informants stated that the e-word of mouth marketing communication strategy carried out by Bittersweet by Najla is found in every invitation content created by them. For example, from the content of giving away free products to one of the followers who have commented on the video content. e-word of mouth done by Bittersweet by Najla allows them to enter FYP so that many people can finally reach the content.

“I think there should be, especially like the lure that I give free, like like the ones on TikTok in reply to people’s comments and then japri using videos like I give free, this, this, this so it’s like the e-word of mouth really reaches the recent FYP.” (MA, interview, 8 May 2023).

“Maybe the e-WoM strategy from Bittersweet by Najla is like reviews from that person. Maybe it’s like he reviewed it in a review on TikTok and like for example the review is good and it can directly influence other people to buy Bittersweet by Najla too.” (DN, interview, 8 May 2023)

If associated with impression management theory, every content produced is Najla’s way of managing the impression of himself in the minds of consumers. Therefore, an image emerges that views Najla’s as a hyperbolic and slightly eccentric person. This can be seen in the way she promotes her products, which tends to exaggerate. For example, by saying that the toppings obtained are very abundant, when they are not that abundant. Even so, there are still consumers who get products with abundant toppings. Therefore, this is still reaping the pros and cons among consumers of Bittersweet by Najla.

Figure 3. e-WoM Marketing Communication Strategy of Bittersweet by Najla

Based on Figure 3, the e-WoM marketing communication strategy of Bittersweet by Najla e-word of mouth applied the 8 dimensions of e-WoM that are visible are as follows, first, tie strength. The content must be able to build a strong connection with...
the audience. This can be done by creating content that is relevant and engaging for the audience. Second, homophily. This engaging content ultimately encourages people to interact by commenting and interacting with other audiences in the comment section. Third, trust. After the interaction is formed, the audience talks more and more about the brand and becomes more trusting of it. Fourth, source credibility. This high trust is formed by the communication actors of Bittersweet by Najla, who are skilled in drafting the persuasive messages they want to convey.

Fifth, message quality. Based on the results of the e-WoM that was formed, the quality of the messages formed is sufficient to encourage the audience to make a purchase of Bittersweet by Najla products. Sixth, content quality. The messages that have been drafted previously, ultimately create high-quality content that is able to persuade the audience to make a purchase. Seventh, valence. Overall, the effect of Bittersweet by Najla’s e-WoM has a positive effect that is also supported by increasing sales. Eighth, degree of influence. The content produced by Bittersweet by Najla can influence the audience to take action. This is because the creator provides clear and concise information or appeals to the audience’s emotions. The change in behavior from not buying to buying Bittersweet products shows that the content has a strong influence.

However, there is a novelty in the results of the research that has been conducted, where the eight e-WoM elements are no longer separate elements, but these elements ultimately become one continuous process when trying to form e-WoM. In other words, the eight dimensions of e-WoM are not independent of each other. They are interconnected and interact with each other to create a positive e-WoM effect. For example, the strength of the audience-brand relationship (tie strength) might influence the audience’s trust in the brand (trust). This trust might lead to the audience being more likely to believe the brand’s messages (message quality). If the messages are convincing enough, they can persuade the audience to act (degree of influence).

There are several effects of successful e-word of mouth. First, the existence of an e-word of mouth makes the audience experience a change in behavior from not making a purchase to making a purchase. After watching promotional content from Bittersweet by Najla, the audience felt that the intention to purchase the product was increasing. Second, as a result of successful e-word of mouth, sales of Bittersweet by Najla also increased.
In line with previous research, which is the basis of the literature in this study. The previous research explained that successful e-word of mouth can increase the potential for people to make purchases (Rochmana et al., 2022). Similarly, in Bittersweet by Najla, the high communication of people about Bittersweet by Najla makes people more moved to make purchases. People’s curiosity, followed by the desire to follow trends, also drives the audience to buy Bittersweet by Najla products.

**Analyzing Bittersweet by Najla’s e-WoM Marketing Communication Strategy Through the Elaboration Likelihood Model**

The interview results explain that the marketing communication strategy carried out by the Bittersweet by Najla brand is through e-WoM. Where the content produced can trigger people’s curiosity to try the product. Based on this analysis, the researcher concluded that the e-WoM strategy carried out by the Bittersweet by Najla brand aims to persuade others to make purchases. This can be attributed to the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

This model was first introduced by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo. This model explains that persuasion activities can be carried out through two routes, namely the central route and the peripheral route. The Central Route explains that a person is persuaded to make a purchase because there is a strong argument from the person doing the persuasion activity. Meanwhile, the peripheral route explains that a person is persuaded to make a purchase because of the emotions felt alone and without considering other things (Griffin et al., 2019). In simple terms, it can be explained that the central route is usually more critical in making considerations before purchase. Meanwhile, the peripheral route is usually more concerned with the instincts and emotions they feel when they get the persuasion.
In relation to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, based on Figure 4, the interview results prove that most consumers of Bittersweet by Najla are central route consumers. The reason is that when making a purchase, there are many things that consumers consider. For example, whether it is worth it to spend a certain amount of money for just one product and others. The existence of these considerations shows that Bittersweet by Najla consumers are critical and considerate people. They need time to process the persuasion content they see before deciding to buy the product.

This can be an input for the Bittersweet by Najla brand to produce promotional content that focuses more on the benefits that will be obtained. For example, “Buy this product; you will get abundant toppings.” This can certainly be a consideration for consumers before deciding to buy. The facts presented in promotional content must be in accordance with the actual product that consumers will get to reduce the risk of consumers being disappointed with our products.

Conclusion

Bittersweet by Najla’s content encourages people to leave as many comments as possible. One of them is free product sharing content and promotional content that seems “over the top.” This style of promotion that tends to be considered “over the top” is what makes many people talk about their products.

Likewise, with the results of interviews conducted with several informants, it was found that the marketing communication carried out by the Bittersweet by Najla
brand played more on the E-WoM strategy. This can be seen in the statements of consumers who admit that they often see people’s review content on social media that persuades them to buy the product.

When making a purchase, informants admitted that there were many considerations made before finally deciding to make a purchase. Considerations made can be from the aspects of price, taste, promos or even from reviews/ratings from other people. Based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model, this consideration process is included in the central route, where before consumers decide to make a purchase of Bittersweet by Najla products, consumers will always go through various stages of consideration.

Although it is felt that Bittersweet by Najla’s marketing communication strategy is quite successful, many consumers feel that the promotions carried out tend to be too excessive and do not match the products sent to consumers. If associated with impression management theory, Najla wants to be seen as having an honest image; that’s why every content produced always provides visual evidence of the products being sold. However, the way Kak Ala communicates seems hyperbole. Because, in reality, the toppings given are not as many as those in the video. This eventually led to consumer disappointment, and according to researchers, this must be changed by the Bittersweet by Najla brand.

In fact, by utilizing the e-word of mouth tool, creators have the freedom to create the content they want, if the content can generate positive conversations about the related brand. This is what is meant by e-WoM. e-WoM relies on voluntary conversations from loyal consumers to encourage product purchases. More and more voluntary forms of conversation will ultimately make other consumers more trusting, which will lead to purchases.

Based on the conclusions, this research provides recommendations for brands owners can explore other forms of content that can help create e-WoM apart from what has already been done. This aims to avoid audience boredom with the content produced. Apart from this, the purpose of this content variation is to increase engagement with the audience to create loyal consumers. Apart from that, for further research, the communication strategy implemented by Bittersweet by Najla is quite interesting to
research using other concepts and theories, such as content marketing, social media marketing, brand engagement, etc.

The reason is that the e-WOM concept has a fairly broad scope, so it is not enough to research it using just two theories. If possible, researchers can interview the owners of the Bittersweet by Najla brand to further explore their point of view in preparing their marketing communications strategy. The reason is that if it is only based on the consumer’s point of view, the findings obtained are not very objective and lack depth.

References


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