

The Implementation of IMC Tools on Marketing Communication in Niche Market @kedaionyi During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: *Covid-19 pandemic has been for almost two years. However, this pandemic is also turning the business flow into an online business, including Mataram city. Various type of online businesses has helped people to support their needs during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of them is Kedai Onyi, the niche market type in food catering with a low budget. The owners offer and develop the business on social media. The purpose of this research is to analyze and describe the implementation of online marketing communication used by the owner of Kedai Onyi based on the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) tools concept. This research is qualitative research with a descriptive method. The result of this research shows us that Kedai Onyi has implemented several IMC tools on its online business. But, the implementation is still not applied to the maximum level.*

Keywords: *marketing communication, IMC tools, small businesses, Niche Market, Covid-19 pandemic.*

INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic was changing all of the human activity. The pandemic situation has also changed all strategic marketing communication applied by all businesses sector in Indonesia, including all businesses that exist in Mataram city. During this pandemic, all retailers and trades have to close their offline stores because of a revenue decrease (N.N., 2020a). At the beginning of this Covid-19 pandemic, the government of Mataram city imposed offline stores or the outlet policy for four months. It is imposed on all public facilities like department stores, markets, malls, etc. The implementation of that policy brings an anxiety impact on all entrepreneurs (Hernawardi, 2020).

However, humans also never stop innovating, especially in the businesses sector. The presence of the online-based business is a form of innovation that has a positive impact during the

covid-19 pandemic, not least in Mataram city. Covid-19 pandemic also give a positive impact on the development of the businesses sector like small businesses that can help all businesses in the process of accelerating the use of digital technology. So that, the exchange process between customers and sellers is continuing online (Shantosa, 2021).

Using digital technology in the businesses sector is also conveyed by Hj. Niken Saptarini Zulkieflimansyah, the governor's mother and the chairman of Dekranasda NTB, that digital lifestyle because of pandemic crisis can be an alternative in changing the patterns or habits of the society in the process of fulfillment of needs and also helps all entrepreneurs in terms of increasing sales, both products and services offered by online or digital. There are four opportunities for the opening of the online or digital-based trade sector, they are food & beverage, fashion & design,

arts, dan digital marketing (N.N., 2020b).

Niche Market is a small business in which has a specialization. According to Kotler (2003), a niche market is a segmented market that has a specification on what the business actor offers to the customers (Parrish et al., 2006). It means the specification is adjusted by customer needs that cannot be found on the other businesses or anywhere else. Today, many niche market businesses are going to expand to online-based businesses.

As Ho et. al. (2010) said, internet technology can provide many conveniences for society in directing the public to know and answer various questions from the society (Wu et al., 2016). It means the internet helps people collect information, including specific information about products or services offered by some brand or businesses without having the customers go to the store. Moreover, entrepreneurs are also moving on to online sales because they are trying to build a balanced flow between offline and online sales and marketing communication. They think that it could help them for increasing their incomes (Son et al., 2017).

Kedai Onyi is one of the niche market types on food and beverage that exists during the Covid-19 pandemic. Kedai Onyi serves customers on food catering in which all customers can adjust prices, menus, and the model of catering by customer want using online order. Although the business activities are arranged on the internet, such as social media Instagram, some marketing activities created by the owner also use offline communication to balance her marketing communication strategy. This research is trying to analyze and explore how the online and offline marketing communication applied by the owner of Kedai Onyi based on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) tools during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a process or strategy in planning, execution, evaluation, coordination, measurement, and persuasion to the communication of brands, products, or services of a business or business with relevant customers and the public (Priansa, 2017). Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is defined as a process of managing the relationship between producers and customers and the public at large to the marketing process that aims to create mutually beneficial relationships and improve the image of a brand, product, or service that marketed. Businesses seek to influence and control customer perception through messages. So that the public is interested in knowing more deeply and finally buying or using the services offered.

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in marketing communication arises due to the lack of communication needs efficiently and effectively in the marketing process (Fill & Turnbull, 2009). Utilizing the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) can minimize duplication, unilateral profit-taking efforts from synchronizing the use of promotional tools, and can develop or expand marketing communication programs or strategies that are more effective and efficient (Titis & Kandhogo, 2014).

Several studies are also similar to this first study, a study (Rismayanti, 2017) entitled "Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) at PT. Hello House singing." Second, the research (Pambudi & Suyono, 2020) entitled "Digital Marketing as An Integrated Marketing Communication Strategy in Village Owned Enterprises (BUMDesa) in East Java. Third, the study (Zilva Nuraini et al., 2021) entitled "Implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Strategy by PUYO Silky Dessert

to Maintain Consumer Loyalty”. Last, the study (Manurung et al., 2020) entitled “Optimization Instagram Content as @gokampusofficial Brand Communication Medium”.

METHOD

This research is qualitative research using the descriptive method. Qualitative research aims for the researcher to analyze and explore a construction or meaning of a phenomenon or issue in-depth analysis (Kriyantono, 2020).

Descriptive qualitative analysis is an in-depth process to explain the data because qualitative research is viewed as a verified process of various phenomena or issues based on various perspectives. So that, all the data collected by the researcher are described in narrative form. The descriptive method is usually used in social phenomena or issues that aim to make a factual and systematic overview about social phenomena or issues (Nazir, 2017).

The subject in this research is the implementation of marketing communication that was applied by Kedai Onyi, as one of the niche market sectors based on IMC tools during the Covid-19 pandemic. Inappropriate with the unit of analysis, data collection techniques in this research are using interview techniques and documentation studies.

It means the researcher tries to get in-depth information about the implementation of marketing communication from the owner, who run the business independently. The interview technique used is semi-structured or open-ended interviews to collect much information openly, so it can help the researcher to make various perspectives in the analysis process (Creswell, 2014).

Data collecting in interview technique also verified with secondary data that are some documentation information collected by the researcher from Instagram

Kedai Onyi. So documentation data is possible in visual form. Documentation studies is a collecting technique from several archives, documents, or maybe field records. It is possible to support primary data (Creswell, 2015). Because of that, the analysis data use qualitative analysis method, namely Miles & Huberman model (Sugiyono, 2018).

This model has four-step to help the researcher analyze the data. First, data collecting is the process of collecting much data from the data collecting technique applied by the researcher. Second, data reduction is the process of selecting all the data, so the researcher has specific data that can describe the results of the research. Third, data display which is all the data presented in descriptive or narrative form. Last is the conclusion that is the process to conclude all the presenting data in this research (Sugiyono, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of IMC Tools

Based on the description of the marketing communication program planning by the owner of Kedai Onyi, it is shown that her business did successfully run the planning. In terms of the process of implementing marketing communication, the marketing communications of Kedai Onyi are divided into two subs, offline and online marketing communication. However, when reviewed based on the components or tools of IMC, Kedai Onyi does not fully apply the IMC to the implementation of marketing communications. Based on the results of data analysis, it was concluded that in the offline marketing communication sub, Kedai Onyi only applies IMC direct marketing tools, and for sub online marketing communication, Kedai Onyi applies IMC advertising and digital marketing tools.

Offline Marketing Communication

The results showed, when the owner of Kedai Onyi began marketing and introducing her business to the public, first, she reached her immediate neighborhoods such as family, relatives, friends, co-workers, and others. On several occasions, the bidding approach process coupled with the provision of food testers. It is to strengthen the persuasion and marketing communication process. The methods carried out by the owner of Kedai Onyi are in line with what is called direct marketing. Direct marketing is the process of managing customer behavior and habits without intermediaries. The goal is to get a response directly, create personal communication, and attempt to influence customers directly. Direct marketing is applied to complement other marketing communication strategies (Fill & Turnbull, 2016).

The owner of Kedai Onyi combined direct marketing tools with digital marketing and advertising tools. Direct marketing is usually applied not to use various intermediaries in communicating its marketing. However, considering that the current situation requires communication and move by utilizing intermediaries, namely the media and the marketing strategies to develop continuously. Today, many people have used communication technology and the internet to convince the public and demonstrate the success of marketing communications. So that, in the end, the direct marketing process that is currently running or carried out by an entrepreneur is no longer just face-to-face or direct offers. It can be done directly by being chained by the media. The response received remained direct but mediated. To maximize the direct marketing process, the owner uses intermediaries such as food testers or products sold for free to convince and affect the public and customers.

In direct marketing tools, there are two approaches in the use of media, namely the one-step approach and the two-step approach (Belch, GE & Belch, 2009). The one-step is media that aims to attract public attention and ultimately place an order directly when the public sees the message or information of a product, brand, or service displayed. Direct marketing in media that uses a one-step approach is usually direct marketing done on television, radio, or advertising media such as billboards and others in the form of advertising.

Direct marketing in media that uses a two-step approach is the first stage aims to filter potential buyers then the next stage is an attempt in generating a response. This approach is used in the form of the telemarketing concept that business owners or businesses have a database of customers and prospective customers and then distribute information messages directly to customers and prospective customers personally.

Based on the results, looking at the form of direct marketing carried out by Kedai Onyi, the two-step approach is more dominant. Considering that Kedai Onyi is a small business type, the owner of Kedai Onyi only conducts direct marketing in a two-step approach. After successfully approaching and collecting a database of potential customers, the owner of Kedai Onyi distribute messages directly or marketing information based on the database through face-to-face or chat features on Whatsapp and direct messages on Instagram. For a one-step approach, the owner utilizes advertising services in Social Media Instagram, namely Instagram ads, which is a feature of advertising or sponsorship services facilitated by Instagram. The goal is to target the specifics of customers and prospective customers of a business or business on Instagram.

Users of Instagram (IG) ads can

set the targets and costs incurred to sponsor independently. According to the informant, IG ads are helpful for small businesses such as Kedai Onyi to reach customers. It is because ads or sponsors aired on social media exposed people or customers looking for information. In addition to utilizing IG ads, the owner also uses endorsement services or promotional content support from influencers and culinary special promotional media around Lombok on Instagram, such as @kulinerdilombok. The purpose of culinary promotional media is in line with IG ads, namely to collect databases about customers, especially potential customers.

Digital Marketing Communication

The results showed that Kedai Onyi applies advertising tools, namely Instagram services ads to advertise and promote business on social media. Digital advertising services are now very widely used by businesses. However, as a startup that is still relatively small and has just been running, Kedai Onyi adjusts the method of advertising and use of media to promote how the habits of the public today are more viewed and searched for information online. The ads carried out by Kedai Onyi through IG ads also require a measure of its success (Clow & Baack, 2018) such as building brand awareness advertising providing clear and informative information; advertising is influential (persuasion); advertising supports the marketing process; and advertising encourages the occurrence of actions in the form of interactions

Based on the results, advertising conducted by Kedai Onyi is successful fairly. It is seen from the number of followers on Instagram social media @kedaionyi currently as many as 1,024 followers. As one of the newly pioneered businesses, the number of followers is enough to illustrate that brand awareness

from Kedai Onyi has begun to form in the community. Kedai Onyi is already quite well known by the public in the public domain online. The ads also encourage direct action where the public or customers then contact Toko Onyi to place an order. Quoting from Halim about brand awareness (2015), Instagram can help all businesses to create a high level of engagement from their followers. A high level of social engagement means that the message conveyed is successfully understood and in demand by the user. This engagement can take the form of likes, comments, and even up to the reshare stage (Manurung et al., 2020).

In addition to using IMC advertising tools, Kedai Onyi also added the power of digital marketing communication tools by applying digital marketing tools. Digital marketing is an amalgamation of all marketing components, both online and offline integrated into digital media, namely the internet (Clow & Baack, 2018). Digital marketing is considered more profitable and promising in helping business people or businesses because it allows the public, especially customers and potential customer to receive various information about products or service and make it easier for business people to be able to analyze customer characteristics through interactions on the internet (Pambudi & Suyono, 2020).

Kedai Onyi utilizes social media Instagram to become its official digital media in communication marketing. Social media is now digital or online media widely used by entrepreneurship and business. Social media builds networks and social relationships for people who have interests, hobbies, backgrounds, or even build new connections for a specific purpose (Belch, GE & Belch, 2009). In the official Instagram profile of Kedai Onyi, spelled out with details about the business, products sold or offered, contacts, address or location, how to

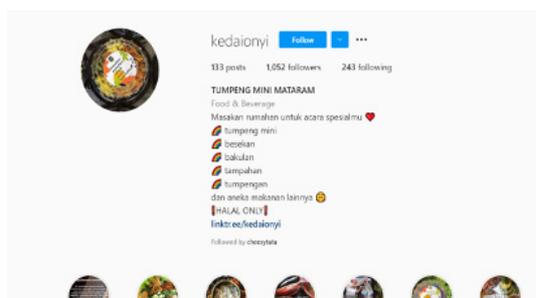


FIGURE 1. Instagram Profile of Kedai Onyi (Source: Instagram @kedaionyi)

order, and snippets about customer testimonials. This can be seen from @kedaionyiInstagram (FIGURE 1)

As for matters related to marketing communication content, Kedai Onyi is very active in providing up-to-date information and marketing persuasion messages in the form of photo and video content on the official Instagram of Kedai Onyi (FIGURE 2). The arrangement of content on Instagram Kedai Onyi is neat and well organized. So, the public or customers have no difficulty finding information or other things that want to be known related to Kedai Onyi. Image content also comes with descriptions of persuasive messages to the public or customers packaged in an interested and informative manner.

Doing digital marketing also has different forms of strategies so that messages and information about products, brands, or services can directly target public segmentation or potential customers. The various strategies in digital marketing are (1) interactive marketing, (2) content and native marketing, (3) Location-based advertising, (4) Remarketing, (5) Behavioral targeting, (6) Blogs and newsletters, (7) E-mail Marketing (Clow & Baack, 2018). Based on the research on digital marketing content conducted by Kedai Onyi, the form of digital strategy that is trying to be applied first is interactive marketing.

Interactive marketing is a strategy

to create interaction between business people and customers and potential customers (Clow & Baack, 2018). There is interaction or communication that is built-in marketing content that is disseminated or updated on the Instagram of Kedai Onyi. In addition to helping to target potential customers and current customers with messages or information tailored to the public character online, interactive marketing also engages customers actively in the marketing exchange process.

However, existing marketing content has not maximized the interactivity process in Instagram. The content on Instagram has not created interactivity with current and potential customers through comments shared. The content shared is still information about products and testimonials. So interactivity has not become a habit in the content on Instagram Kedai Onyi. It is seen from the number of likes, shares, and comments in each digital marketing content that is not much. The content setting allows it to be seen by the public, but the public, especially regulars and potential customers, do not have an interest in joining and building interactions because the content shared is informative content but not interactive.

Until now, the task of marketing communication is still handled by the owner of Kedai Onyi independently. This is because Kedai Onyi is still a small business type. And this can be one of the causes of the lack of interaction on their marketing content. The limitations in human resources in the internal Kedai Onyi also affect content ideas that can increase brand awareness, brand image, and social engagement. Engagement in social media such as Instagram is important for a business. Halim (2015) said that engagement is the first stage in building a relationship between customers and brands, engagement will



FIGURE 2. Digital Marketing Content of Kedai Onyi (Source: Instagram @ kedaionyi)

make consumers willing to help promote and protect the brand and generate brand advocates, and engagement formed with consumers will make a better product (Manurung et al., 2020).

Second, Kedai Onyi implements a content marketing tool. Content marketing is a marketing tool done and created by third parties. (FIGURE 3) As a medium or information provider, the goal is to help promote a product, brand, or service (Clow & Baack, 2018). Content marketing seeks to increase brand awareness and social engagement towards a business and the product or service promoted (Clow & Baack, 2018).

Endorsement is a form of content marketing in which a person or an information provider opens and manages paid promotional services. Business people do not need to think about digital marketing content because the third party will create and package marketing content digitally so that the public can be interested and visit the business instagram or directly contact the business and make the ordering process. Content marketing is an alternative used by entrepreneurs in advertising or implementing IMC advertising tools. Currently, traditional and digital advertisements are widely circulated to the point that they are considered disturbing the public. So the



FIGURE 3. Content marketing on Third Media (Source: Instagram @ kulinerdilombok)

messages or information disseminated cannot be conveyed or are not well received by the public.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

The result of this research shows that a combination of offline and online marketing communication performed by Kedai Onyi as a niche market business type during the Covid-19 pandemic has described how the owner quite understands the concept of marketing communication. The owner of Kedai Onyi understands her goals or targets to be achieved. The owner generally knows the importance of communication and marketing components in running a business. Thus, the communication component is integrated into the marketing process and changes the communication and marketing components that are initially separated. Then it is blended or merged.

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a mix between the communication component in the form of public relations and advertising and the 4P marketing mix, which are product, price, place, and promotion. (FIGURE 4) The mixing of the two components then formed new tools in marketing communication and is known as IMC tools. The IMC has five components or tools, namely advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, and publicity/public



FIGURE 4. Tools of IMC (Source: Belch & Belch, 2009: 16)

relations (Belch, GE & Belch, 2009).

However, some experts also add a summary of tools related to marketing communication and adjust to the era of technology utilization today. IMC tools are related to packaging, event & sponsorship, and customer service (Ekhlassi, 2012). These three additional tools are still quite influential in marketing communication. But these tools are not the main components or tools in the concept of IMC. The three tools can be used as an option if the businessmen want further detail on marketing communication application to product operations and efforts to reach specific customer interests.

Then, digital marketing also became an additional tool of IMC in marketing communication strategies (Belch, GE & Belch, 2009). These tools describe the use of internet technology in marketing. Businesses use digital media to communicate business marketing, products, or services. The interactive nature of digital media communication makes business people receive responses or feedback more quickly.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Planning

The first step for a business actor is creating a marketing communication program or strategy for business, product, and service. The goal is to map the opportunities and possibilities of the business undertaken, including planning the right marketing communication

strategy by utilizing IMC tools.

Before directly implementing a marketing communication program, first, the business owner Kedai Onyi does research and planning. So that messages and information about Kedai Onyi can be received by the public directly. As for the planning carried out spelled out by the owner in the form of mapping what kind of market. Secondly, the owner conducted research and determined the type of product marketed. Third, the owner analyzed the internal side, from the business's suitability with its routine to the

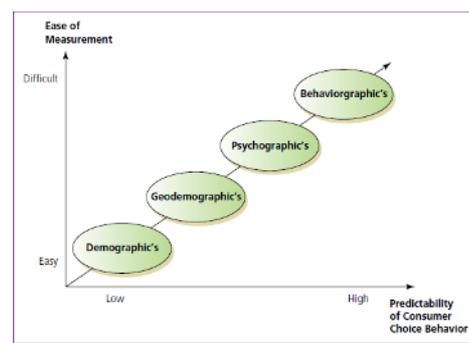


FIGURE 5. Targeting Aspect in IMC Planning (Source: Shimp, 2006: 91)

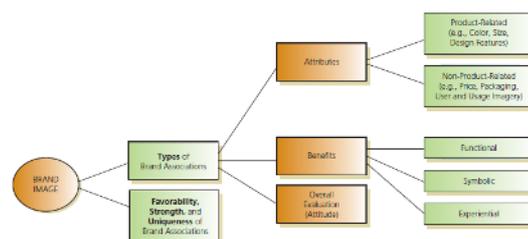


FIGURE 6. Positioning Aspect to create brand image (Source: Shimp, 2006: 124)

ability with the existing budget. Fourth, the owner analyzed the characteristics of the public as a prospective customer. The last, established the communication process in marketing businesses and products to the public. The plan carried out by Kedai Onyi's owner has followed the planning of IMC in marketing communication.

Generally, the stages in IMC planning are the same as the planning stages in general, namely targeting analysis, positioning, marketing objectives, and budgeting (Shimp, 2006). The targeting step is to read the conditions of prospective customers so that business people or businesses can adjust messages or information based on the characteristics of the public and prospective customers based on geographical conditions, geodemographic (group analysis, public sub-units based on their geography), and psychographics to form a habit (FIGURE 5).

Furthermore, at the positioning stage, the owner used to read and place the products, brands, or services we offer in the right market and customer environment according to targeting analysis. (FIGURE 6) This positioning stage described by Kaller (1993) is a process of forming the image of a product, brand, or service (Shimp, 2006).

The marketing objective stage is the process of shortening and maximizing planning adjusted to the estimated time in the scope of business or business. In addition to time constraints, marketing communication planning is also ordered based on achievements completed, both collectively and individually. Thus, in addition to market and customer analysis results, any marketing communication plan must be measured based on time and goals achievement. The last is the budgeting stage which all businesses must also make a plan of marketing communication budget estimates.

In detail, (Belch, GE & Belch, 2009) IMC planning begins with: (1) Conduct a review of the marketing plan. It aims to find t the existing market conditions by examining the planning and objectives of products and marketing tailored to the market, analyzing the role of advertising and promotion, analyzing similar businesses or competitors that already exist in the market, and analyzing emerging environmental influences. (2) Analyze the situation in the promotion. It is related to the process of analyzing promotions based on the internal and external situation of the business running. From the internal side, the things that go into the analysis of the promotion situation are the organizational environment and the promotion department, the ability

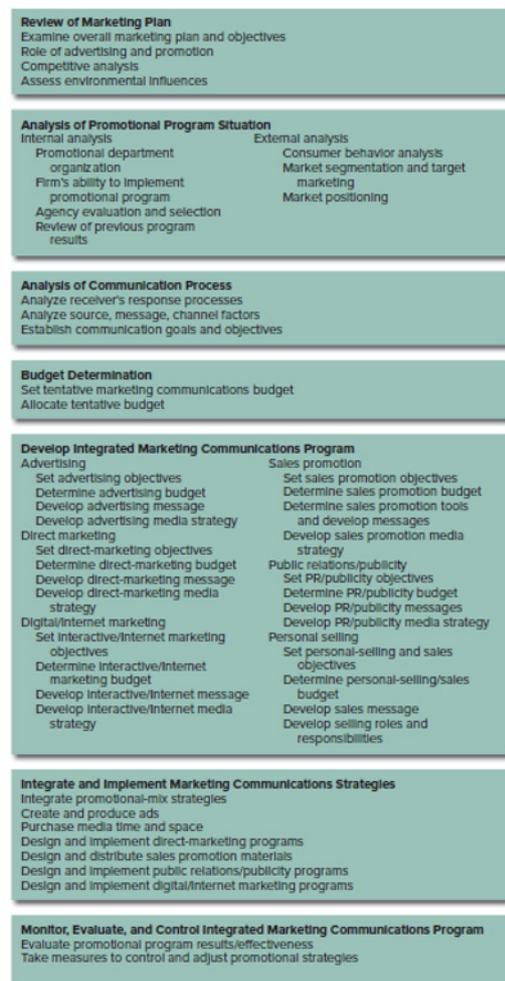


FIGURE 7. The Step of IMC Planning (Source: Belch & Belch, 2009: 33)

to carry out promotions, reviews of promotional results, and finally is the evaluation process to select promotional strategies or programs carried out.

From the external side, the things considered in the promotion analysis are consumer behavior, the picture of the existing market segmentation, marketing targets to be achieved, and the position of our products in the market. (3) Next is to analyze the communication process. This analysis includes an analysis of the process of acceptance or public response to the business, product, or service offered; analysis of sources, messages, and the use of channels or media as intermediaries in communicating; and the determination of the goals and objectives of communication. (4) Then, the planning stages of IMC continue with the determination of the budget. This stage includes the budget for marketing communication and the budget for the overall implementation of the business. (5) Enter into a more specific stage of planning, namely planning in detail related to IMC's components or tools used in communication marketing and things considered in each component or IMC tool used. (6) Then, create a marketing communication implementation strategy based on IMC tools established. (7) Lastly is the process of monitoring, controlling, and evaluating the implementation or implementation of marketing communication strategies based on IMC tools. Furthermore, an overview of IMC's concept planning in marketing communications is in FIGURE 7.

Niche Market Strategy

This research shows that the owner has applied the strategy in the process of their business. She did market research to get data on some specific audience, market orientation, demography, segmentation, and the targets is one step to the classification type of the

businesses. Dalgic and Leeuw (1994) define five essential elements of niche market strategies. Namely, positioning, profitability, distinctive competencies, small market segments, and adherence to the market concept (Parrish et al., 2006).

Based on the result, the owner has analyzed their markets and audience to build several specifications and specialization on what the owner offers to the customers. The owner tries to find the kind of urgently needed during the Covid-19 pandemic. For offline strategy, the owner has succeeded to built engagement or making a continuable relationship with the customers. In the digital process, it has no customer engagement or relationship yet. It shows that content on the Kedai Onyi Instagram has not attracted customers to comment or respond by turning the likes button and texting direct messages. They just asked about Kedai Onyi or gave feedback about the services. It means, the digital strategy still needs to be maximized.

The most important factor in the niche marketing to succeed is relationships (Parrish et al., 2006). Dalgic and Leeuw (1994) said that strong, long-term relationships could build a barrier to deter some potential competitors and sustain long-term profitability like customer retention. One's opinions play a crucial role in a product's success (Parrish et al., 2006). Quoted from Michaelson (1988), that the first rule of a niche market strategy is to offer the customer a clearly differentiated product that fills (or creates) a need. His opinion based on Raynor (1992) perspective that true niche marketing must be based on the ability to provide products that meet actual customer needs. The niche has to be real, and the product has to satisfy (Parrish et al., 2006). Engagement is important for all business actors to give much information about people's reactions and responses. Some experts believe that a business or

marketing strategy will be in danger if every promotion or marketing does not build many responses by the public. If there is feedback given by people, either positive or negative, it indicates that the owner has been successful in introducing their product or businesses to the public.

CONCLUSION

From the results presented in the discussion, it is concluded that the concepts of IMC help specify and map how the implementation of marketing communication by marketers not only in the scope of business or macro-scale business, but businesses in micro and specific scope such as the niche market can also use IMC concepts and tools. Also, IMC concepts and tools can be integrated digitally. It further facilitates and accelerates the process of disseminating messages and information related to marketing to customers, especially potential customers.

Kedai Onyi is a small business of niche market that has implemented several Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) tools in the promotion and marketing process. Toko Onyi adjusts IMC tools in its marketing communication process based on situation and how people's habits today utilize internet technology. And during the Covid-19 pandemic situation, Kedai Onyi tends to do more marketing communications digitally.

However, there are things or aspects in digital marketing that have not run maximally. It also affects the process of building brand awareness and brand image in the community. It needs to be the attention of business owners and other business people when they want to implement the IMC series of tools as the power of their product or service marketing communication strategy.

Marketing content and messages shared on social media @kedaionyi are

quite interesting and informative. That is, niche market owners have systematically compiled a variety of content and marketing messages whose purpose is to attract the attention of customers and the public on social media. However, the public interest built has not reached the development of active interactivity in every content and marketing message shared on social media. That is why the marketing content and messages have not been able to build full strength related to brand awareness and the brand image of Kedai Onyi itself and its social media, namely @kedaionyi. The messages and content marketing shared can not describe the characteristics or as a specialty of @kedaionyi that is easily remembered or can even be remembered continuously by the public.

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