



## Communication Competence of Social Media Specialist in Building Brand Awareness of Honda Central Java on Social Media Instagram

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### ABSTRACT

The background of this study is the rapid development of social media and the high demand for Social Media Specialists in the industry but there are no assessment standards for evaluation by various companies. The objective of this study is to identify the aspects required to develop the communication competencies necessary for a Social Media Specialist to brand on social media effectively. The research methodology employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques including observations and interviews with the team directly responsible for managing the Instagram account @hondajateng. The results of the study indicate that there are several values from three communication competence dimensions that are correlated in building brand awareness and must be possessed by a Social Media Specialist.

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## INTRODUCTION

The presence of social media has successfully impacted various aspects of human life, especially in the field of communication. The ease of interacting and exchanging information with unlimited distance and time has succeeded in making humans create relationships with other humans in various parts of the world. The ability of social media to develop business not only provides convenience for business people but also creates many new jobs, one of which is a Social Media Specialist.

Social Media Specialist is a profession included in the field of digital marketing that focuses on business development on social media. Social Media Specialist has the main task of being able to create effective marketing strategies, create interesting content, and manage good relationships between brands and their consumers. The emergence of this profession is a form of fulfilling the needs of industries from local to global scale to start switching to digitalization through social media because of the various potentials and benefits possessed by social media in developing business.

This potential is supported by the large number of active social media users in Indonesia. Based on data compiled by We Are Social in 2024, 139 million people in Indonesia are active social media users. With this massive number of users, of course, it also opens up various opportunities to reach various target consumers through social media.

According to Moriansyah (2015), social media allows companies to increase consumer awareness of a brand that is tailored to the intended market segmentation. This is supported by the existence of algorithms on social media that regulate the content that appears on the user's homepage by looking at the tendency of information that is often searched and accessed by users (Arifin & Fuad, 2020). With this algorithm, brands can adjust the content to be created with the characteristics of the social media users they want to target to expand their awareness reach.

Considering that Brand Awareness is important to increase sales, it is necessary to have the skills and ability to plan a mature strategy to increase Brand Awareness through social media. However, based on research by the Boston Consulting Group, 70% of digital transformations carried out by various global companies have failed (Forth. Dkk, 2020). Research from Mckinsey also adds that one of the factors for a company's failure in digital transformation is the unpreparedness of the workforce and unsupportive management (Bucy. Dkk, 2016). The unpreparedness of the workforce and management has resulted in many companies being unable to optimize the digital media they use, making consumers not interested in the company's products (Putri, 2022).

Therefore, many companies are interested in starting to hire experts and professionals such as the Social Media Specialist profession to develop a mature strategy in order to optimally manage their business on social media. This can be seen from the Future of Jobs 2023 report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) which shows an increase in the number of open vacancies for the field of digital strategy & marketing, even predicted in the next 4 years there will be an increase in the number of open vacancies in this field up to 25% (WEF, 2023).

Unfortunately, the increasing demand for vacancies as a Social Media Specialist is not followed by the availability of formal education to accommodate and guide talented talents in the field of social media and the absence of absolute benchmarks that can be used as communication competencies in the profession as a Social Media Specialist. Communication competence itself is a very important aspect in carrying out communication activities. According to Devito (in Susana. Dkk, 2023), communication competence is a person's ability that will determine effectiveness in communication. Social Media Specialist is a profession that is closely related to communication because Social Media Specialist plays a role in designing the right communication strategy so that messages conveyed through social media can be received and understood properly by the audience.

To minimize communication errors on social media and build effective awareness, it is necessary to research the communication competencies that must be possessed by a Social Media Specialist. In this study, researchers will conduct an assessment with a team of Social Media Specialists who manage Instagram @hondajateng social media as research subjects. That way this research will focus on knowing how the communication competencies of Social Media Specialists in building effective brand awareness of Honda Central Java on Instagram social media.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Communication Competency Theory*

Competence in social life is a basic need in the process of interacting to be able to produce an influence. Communication competence is one of the theories that is discussed and researched from various aspects and perspectives. Simply put, communication competence can be defined as the ability of individuals to be able to interact well and effectively with others in various contexts and situations (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). According to DeVito (in Susana. Dkk, 2023), communication competence is the ability to communicate effectively, this ability includes knowledge of the role of the environment (context) in influencing the content (content) and communication messages.

In this communication competence theory, according to Brian Spitzberg and William Cupach (in LittleJohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017), there are 3 important indicators in assessing individual communication competence, namely:

- a) Knowledge, knowledge is the basis of the message to be conveyed and understanding of the rules and how to behave in communication which can be seen from the level of education and experience of individuals. According to Littlejohn. (2017), there are 2 types of knowledge that affect communication competence, namely content knowledge and procedural knowledge. Content knowledge or content that must be mastered so that communicators can convey messages more effectively includes things such as principles, ideas, theories, and facts related to a particular subject. As for procedural knowledge which includes understanding in using the right skills and knowledge in doing a particular task or activity.
- b) Motivation, is a desire that encourages individuals to do certain things. In the context of communication, motivation is related to the willingness of

individuals to convey a message thoroughly. The higher the individual motivation will affect the more effective and efficient communication that occurs, and vice versa, if the motivation is lower, the message conveyed tends to be less effective. According to Danim (in Risvayani, 2015), motivation can be categorized into 2 types, namely positive motivation & negative motivation. Positive motivation is based on the desire for a benefit or achieving a certain goal. Meanwhile, negative motivation is based on fear of punishment.

- c) Skill, skill is a habit done repeatedly and intentionally. Skills are aspects that can be learned in doing a job repeatedly or often interacting with others. According to Gregorio. Dkk (2019), in digital marketing there are several skills that are most needed so that the work done can be more effective, namely basic skills, analytical skills, digital and technical skills, and marketing skills.



Figure 1. Research Thinking Framework

## METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach, which focuses on in-depth explanations based on original descriptions from informants. This method was chosen because it is based on the philosophy of postpositivism which allows researchers to study natural object conditions and prioritizes meaning over generalization. To obtain data, researchers took samples using purposive sampling technique, which is part of non-probability sampling. This technique allows researchers to select informants intentionally based on the consideration that they have expertise and knowledge relevant to the research topic.

In this study, three informants were selected who met specific criteria: they are active users of Instagram social media, have experience of being involved in the @hondajateng Instagram social media project, and have been or are currently serving as Social Media Specialists who manage the account for at least six months.

The data sources in this research are divided into two types. Primary data is the main data obtained directly from the first source, namely the Social Media Specialists who are responsible for managing the @hondajateng Instagram account. This primary data collection is done through interview sessions. Meanwhile, secondary data serves as a support obtained from various literature and documentation. Specifically, the main secondary data in this research is the content that has been produced by the @hondajateng Instagram account over the past year, supported by books and journals that discuss social media and communication competency theory.

The data collection process was conducted through two main techniques. The first is interviews, where researchers use in-depth interview techniques conducted face-to-face to obtain maximum and in-depth information from the Social Media Specialists @hondajateng. The second technique is observation, which is used to directly observe how a Social Media Specialist works, designs, and produces content for Instagram social media @hondajateng.

To ensure the validity of the data obtained, researchers conducted a series of validity tests. The data credibility test was carried out using triangulation and member check techniques. The triangulation applied is source triangulation, which is by comparing and checking the data obtained from several different informants. After that, a member check process was carried out, in which the researcher reconfirmed the data findings with the informants to ensure conformity and agreement.

Furthermore, to strengthen validity, the existing data will also be adjusted with various relevant literature. This research also conducted a transferability test to see the extent to which the research results can be applied to other situations, as well as dependability and confirmability tests through an audit process of the entire research flow to ensure the reliability and objectivity of the findings.

Data analysis in this study adopted the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which is carried out continuously until the data is considered saturated. This analysis process includes three stages. The first stage is data reduction, in which the researcher summarizes, selects, and focuses the voluminous and complex data on the main points. In this context, irrelevant data will be eliminated, and researchers will only focus on data regarding knowledge, skills, and motivation from informants. The second stage is data presentation, where the reduced data is presented in the form of descriptive narratives from the interview results for easy understanding. The last stage is conclusion drawing, where new findings regarding knowledge, skills, and motivation obtained from informants will be analyzed and compared with relevant theories from experts to answer the formulation of research problems.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

This research successfully identified three main aspects of competence that must be possessed by a Social Media Specialist to successfully build brand awareness, namely skills, knowledge, and motivation.

## **Skills**

Skills are an important indicator that determines the competence of a Social Media Specialist in facing real work challenges. Based on the findings in the field, there are several essential abilities that must be mastered including;

(1) Interpersonal Communication Skills, this ability is crucial because Social Media Specialists do not work alone. Effective communication between divisions, such as with the design and videography teams, is needed to ensure the content results match the initial concept and avoid miscommunication. In addition, interpersonal communication through team discussions is a source of fresh and creative content ideas, so that the content produced is not monotonous. This ability is also used to negotiate with superiors regarding targets that are considered unrealistic, by coming up with solutions or alternative options. (2) Marketing Ability, this ability is very important to build a brand image on social media. A Social Media Specialist must be able to develop effective communication strategies and short but impactful messages, considering that audiences on social media have a short attention span. Within this ability, there are two specific skills, namely copywriting or Creative writing skills are key to attracting consumer attention and in-depth market research is absolutely necessary to understand the target market, audience preferences, and current trends.

(3) Analytics Skills, social media provides a lot of data, so the ability to read and analyze data (Social Media Analytics) is very important. Social Media Specialists must be able to analyze data from features such as Instagram Insight to understand why content performance goes up or down. The results of this analysis then become evaluation material for management to design future content strategies. (4) Digital Skills, as a practitioner in the digital world, mastering this skill is the core of the profession.

## **Knowledge**

Knowledge is a measure of the depth of an individual's understanding of the theories and procedures relevant to their work. This knowledge is divided into two main types, namely Content Knowledge and Procedural Knowledge.

Content Knowledge which is the theoretical knowledge that must be mastered which includes;

(1) Product Knowledge includes a deep understanding of the product is mandatory. This allows them to create content that is relevant to the target audience. (2) Market Knowledge includes an understanding of market conditions, customer desires, and competitors' strengths and weaknesses. (3) Visual Graphic Knowledge, this knowledge includes a basic understanding of visual elements such as colors and logos that represent brand identity. However, for Social Media Specialists this knowledge is sufficient to understand at a basic level and does not need to be too in-depth.

(4) Knowledge of Viral Trends and Issues, Social Media Specialists are required to always be up-to-date so as not to miss the momentum regarding information and trends that are currently being paid attention to by the audience. (5) Knowledge of Social Media Metrics, understanding the various metrics on each social media platform as a means of measuring social media performance

and being able to understand the most relevant metrics according to campaign objectives. (6) Language Knowledge, including the understanding to choose the right words to influence the audience's perception of the product.

Meanwhile, Procedural Knowledge is an understanding of "how" to do a job, including;

(1) Knowledge of Work Procedures which is an understanding of work flow and standards. This understanding is very important to maintain consistency and quality of work. (2) Tool Usage Knowledge, is an understanding to operate the features in each social media and supporting tools such as analytic tools, scheduling tools, and so on.

### ***Motivation***

Motivation is divided into two types, positive motivation and negative motivation, both positive and negative, being strong drivers that affect the productivity and commitment of a Social Media Specialist.

Positive Motivation is motivation that is based on the desire for gain or reward. As a Social Media Specialist, this motivation includes;

(1) Ambition to Meet Targets, giving realistic targets is actually a trigger for enthusiasm which actually improves the performance of Social Media Specialists. (2) Desire to Develop Yourself, a dynamic work environment in the world of social media motivates to continue learning new things that can lead to improved work performance. (3) Desire for Appreciation, Appreciation that comes from the audience through positive comments can give a sense of pride and satisfaction to the Social Media Specialist which will increase the enthusiasm to work better.

Negative Motivation is motivation that stems from fear of something harmful, including the desire to avoid sanctions. The desire to avoid sanctions, can provide a deterrent effect for violators so that it can be a driving force to work more optimally and avoid the same mistakes.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the research that has been conducted, the main focus in this study is to find out what communication competencies must be possessed by Social Media Specialists and how they are implemented in building brand awareness of Honda Central Java's Instagram social media or @hondajateng.

### ***Implementation of Skills in Building Brand Awareness***

Interpersonal Communication skills are abilities that greatly affect the effectiveness of teamwork to build brand awareness. Consistency of messages in various marketing channels determines how a brand will be remembered by consumers. This is in line with the opinion of Keller & Swaminathan (2019: 238) that message consistency in marketing activities will determine how a brand will be remembered by consumers. To achieve this consistency, harmonious communication between team members is needed to equalize ideas and thoughts.

Openness and safety in communication create a constructive discussion space, where creative ideas can emerge when designing marketing campaigns. These skills are helpful in team coordination, problem-solving, and negotiating

targets or deadlines, thus preventing miscommunication that can lead to poor content.

Marketing skills also have a direct relationship with building brand awareness. This includes designing an effective branding strategy and determining the right brand positioning to differentiate from competitors. A strong and clear brand positioning will make it easier for consumers to recognize and remember the brand. It also helps in identifying relevant target audiences, so that interactions can create emotional connections and strengthen brand image. This process is supported by in-depth market research that becomes the foundation of the communication strategy. With marketing skills, a Social Media Specialist can design content concepts and copywriting that attracts audience attention, which is the first step in building brand awareness. This is in line with Vorhies and Morgan's (2005) research which states that marketing skills play an important role in increasing understanding of the market, which is the key to surviving in the midst of intense competition.

Analytic capabilities also correlate with brand awareness building as they allow companies to integrate information to support innovation and competitiveness. This capability is important for evaluating marketing performance and monitoring audience response to campaigns. The data obtained is used as a basis for determining the next strategy because data from social media can be the basis for analyzing user behavior. This information becomes a reference in developing, implementing, and evaluating more targeted marketing strategies to build sustainable brand awareness. This is in accordance with research from Alfajri. Dkk (2019) which argues that the use of Social Media Analytics has proven to play an important role in increasing marketing effectiveness.

In addition, digital capabilities have a close relationship with brand awareness, especially for brands that are just pioneering on social media. Mastery of social media features and tools plays an important role in the technical aspects of creating and publishing consistent content. This view is in line with the opinion of Novia. Dkk, (2023: 291-292) which states that utilizing the right tools can increase the overall effectiveness of marketing activities. Starting from planning to execution, so that the process runs more efficiently. This capability also makes it easier to monitor marketing strategies, analyze results, and evaluate if there are any discrepancies. In addition, this ability helps Social Media Specialists to quickly adapt to the latest trends or issues, so that brands can continue to be relevant and increase their exposure.

### ***Implementation of Knowledge in Building Brand Awareness***

In-depth product knowledge is very influential in designing effective communication strategies. A marketer must understand the brand's identity and values to be able to communicate them clearly and convincingly to consumers, which ultimately builds trust and credibility. Effective delivery of product knowledge can strengthen brand image and increase consumer confidence. By understanding the product thoroughly, marketers can tailor their offerings to the various characteristics and needs of potential customers. This view is supported

by Chaffey and Chadwick (2019: 233-234), who state that effective delivery of product knowledge can have a significant effect, not only in increasing consumer understanding of products, but also in strengthening brand image and increasing the level of consumer confidence.

A deep understanding of the market is also a crucial aspect of building brand awareness. This knowledge is important for the process of market segmentation and consumer targeting. With this understanding, marketers can see the market conditions so that the brand can adapt and survive amidst changes, which gives it an edge to gain strong exposure. Market knowledge also supports effective brand positioning, which makes the brand more memorable and stand out from competitors.

Visual Graphics knowledge also has a strong relationship with brand awareness. Elements such as color can become a brand signature that creates a strong perception in the minds of consumers. Visual elements are designed to reflect brand character and become a strategic tool for differentiation from competitors. Research from Henderson. (2003) shows that visual stimuli are learned faster and remembered longer than verbal stimuli, making them effective in building strong brands and customer loyalty. The use of strong visual elements can attract attention, help brands stand out, and strengthen brand recognition.

Issue Knowledge and Viral Trends play a significant role in building brand awareness. By jumping on the bandwagon of current trends, brands have the opportunity to reach a wider audience and increase their visibility. Trending content tends to spread faster and wider, creating massive word of mouth. This is in accordance with the findings of Agustin and Iryanti (2025) that following trends or viral content provides greater exposure opportunities compared to conventional content. Social media algorithms also tend to elevate viral content, so brands that follow them have a high chance of appearing on users' homepages and creating greater brand awareness.

### ***Implementation of Motivation in Building Brand Awareness***

Ambition to achieve targets can be a motivation for a Social Media Specialist. Setting realistic and measurable targets, such as making brand awareness a Key Performance Indicator (KPI), will provide a clear direction of work and encourage improved performance. Research by Locke and Latham (2002) shows that specific targets result in higher performance than ambiguous encouragement. Effective target setting has also been shown to increase job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

The desire to develop oneself can also be a motivation that can lead to a proactive attitude at work to achieve predetermined targets. Research by Dysvik and Kuvaas (2013) shows that when individuals have a strong drive to master their tasks, there is a significant increase in work effort. In the dynamic creative industry, this desire encourages Social Media Specialists to keep learning new things, adapting to trends, and conducting research to create more effective strategies.

Giving appreciation and sanctions can also be a strong driver for Social Media Specialists to work more optimally. Giving appreciation (such as praise or

bonuses) and sanctions serve as effective feedback to increase motivation and performance. When targets are exceeded, appreciation will foster a sense of appreciation and trigger enthusiasm to continue to excel. Conversely, if the target is not achieved, fair sanctions can provide a deterrent effect and encourage performance improvement. Receiving appreciation from superiors and audiences can boost morale and motivation, while sanctions can be a learning experience to avoid repeating mistakes. This combination of the desire to be rewarded and avoid punishment is the driving force for individuals to always deliver maximum performance.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Conclusions***

The communication competencies possessed by the Honda Central Java Social Media Specialist team include three aspects, namely skills, knowledges, and motivation. In the ability aspect, the abilities needed by Social Media Specialists include interpersonal communication skills to create effective communication with other teams, digital skills to be able to complete their work effectively and efficiently using various digital tools or features contained in social media, analytical skills to be able to assist in reading data and information about social media performance that has been carried out to become the basis for evaluating the strategy to be carried out next, and marketing skills to understand products and how to create effective messages to meet the appropriate target market.

In the knowledge aspect, it is divided into two, namely content knowledge and procedural knowledge. In content knowledge, the knowledge needed includes, knowledge of products and markets to be able to determine target consumers who are in accordance with the values offered by related products, knowledge of visual graphics to be able to design visual elements that can support the message to be conveyed, knowledge of trends and viral issues to be able to better blend in with the audience by enlivening trends, knowledge of social media metrics to be able to determine the right data and information to be used as evaluation material, and qualified language knowledge. As for procedural knowledge, it includes knowledge to use appropriate tools and knowledge of appropriate work procedures.

In the aspect of motivation, there are several motivations that can be a driving force to maximize performance, including the desire to develop oneself which will affect the improvement of quality and performance, ambition to achieve predetermined targets, as well as motivation in getting appreciation in the form of praise and bonuses and sanctions to provide a deterrent effect for employees who violate regulations or do not fulfill their responsibilities properly.

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the above research, the authors suggest to several parties as follows:

- (1) For individuals who are or have plans for a career in the creative industry, especially as a Social Media Specialist, this research can be a guideline for developing themselves and developing competence as a Social Media Specialist.

- (2) For companies or brands that need Social Media Specialists so that this research can be an assessment indicator to conduct coaching for their workforce so that they can develop competence as Social Media Specialists.
- (3) For the next writer if interested in continuing this research to involve other variations of social media or try to examine other industrial fields to enrich research options.

### ADVANCED RESEARCH

This research is certainly not perfect research and still requires further research. In this study, researchers are still limited to focusing on one social media platform, namely Instagram. Future research can add other popular platform variables such as TikTok, Twitter, Youtube, or other platforms in the future. Future research can also try to examine Social Media Specialists in other brands or products to enrich research on this much-in-demand profession.

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