

Marketing Communication in the Digital Era: Does it Need Ethics?

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Abstract

This paper discussed various aspects of marketing communication in the digital era. It began with an explanation of the perceptual model of marketing communication activities, followed by an explanation of the actors of marketing communication, both communicators and communicants. The next section discussed some of the Internet technology-based media used to communicate, the uniqueness of the marketing communication in it, and its effects on behavior. Various uniqueness of Internet-based marketing communication media that affect marketing communication factors, the final part contains several things that need to be considered in communicating with the Internet. Marketing communication is carried out by one party to convey messages to the other party. Marketing communication is the transfer of one's understanding of another or the transfer of data from one source to another by using natural or artificial media. Explicitly, The data transferred in marketing communication is in the form of information so that an understanding can be reached between one person and another.

Keywords: marketing communication, digital era, Internet, perceptual process, data

1. Introduction

A mutual understanding between communicators (senders of information) and communicants (recipients of information) involves the process of giving meaning to information through a *coding* process [1]. The communicator does the encoding while the communicant does the decoding. This process of giving meaning involves perception as Perceptual Process Model of Marketing communication. Perception, as the process, product, or act of creating coherence from the patterns of energy impinging on sensory organs, which allows either consciousness of objects or states of the external world or the capacity to react differentially to them [2]. Perception is a cognitive process that allows individuals to interpret and understand their surroundings. When compared with Matsumoto's definition, this cognitive process is carried out by recognizing coherent patterns of various stimuli that come from outside himself, so that the individual becomes aware of the object or situation around him. The process of recognizing coherent patterns of this stimulus is called with sensation. Meanwhile, perception is a cognitive process as a continuation of sensation in which the received signal or stimulus is then interpreted internally by the brain [3].

Perception can be made to objects such as a photo of a colleague, the color and motif of the batik cloth, even the color of the bedroom walls. This paper focuses on perceptions that occur when individuals communicate so that the concept of perception discussed emphasizes the social

perceptions. Social perception occurs in four stages namely selective attention/comprehension, encoding and simplification, storage and retention, and retrieval and response [4].

In marketing communication, it appears that the perceptual process occurs when the sender of the message does the *coding* and the message receiver translates the code (*decoding*) and then interprets the message received. Interpretation activities will occur through a selection process to understand the code sent. If there is some information received, data selection is carried out according to individual characteristics and past experiences stored in memory [5].

After the process of compiling messages through a code in the form of letters, words, sounds, and images has been completed, the communicator chooses what media to use so that the message is received by the communicant properly according to his expectations. The dictions or symbols in communicating is closely related to age, gender, and the formality of the relationship between the two parties. The younger generation tends to use interactive and informal symbols [6].

Media wealth theory or better known as Media Richness Theory (MRT) categorizes media wealth based on the variety of languages that can be delivered such as face-to-face marketing communication, the speed in getting feedback, the number of marketing communication channels involved (audio/visual/verbal/non-verbal), and the ability to accommodate personal closeness related to the desired marketing communication context [7]. With the increasing frequency of use of internet technology in marketing communication, MRT is modified so that media wealth leads to the accuracy of media use according to its purpose.

In terms of the richness of the nature of the media, *face to face* dialogue is the richest medium because it is rich in verbal and non-verbal signals. In face-to-face dialogue, it is easy for individuals to get feedback so that the opportunity for interpersonal marketing communication is greater. The internet-based marketing communication medium that comes closest to face-to-face dialogue is *video conferencing* [8]. Examples of *video conferencing* that are increasingly being used today are Skype and FaceTime. while VoiceMail, Instant Messaging (IM), Email, Short Message Service (SMS), Internet Relay Chat (IRC), and Voice over the Internet Protocol (VoIP) fall into the weak media category.

Are all messages sent by the communicator can be received by the communicant? There are several causes for failed messages in the marketing communication process, namely: (1) barriers that originate in the marketing communication process, (2) personal barriers, (3) barriers that occur in the media used, and (4) semantic barrier.

2. Marketing communication Process Barriers

The first thing that is often be the source of obstruction of messages received by the communicant is the process of sending and receiving messages is not smooth. Process barriers can occur in the message communicator, the encoding process, the media process, the interpretation process, the communicant's process, and the feedback process [9].

First, marketing communication does not occur because the communicator does not send the information for various reasons, such as fear or embarrassment. This marketing communication barrier is quite a lot experienced by individuals, especially those who are classified to the shy adolescents. Three causes of marketing communication problems, namely the existence of unpleasant past experiences related to marketing communication, negative thoughts that if individuals communicate [10], others will not listen to them, and lack of opportunities to practice marketing communication. In the internet era, the failure to deliver a message can also occur because the sender mismanages the technology, for example, errors in writing the address in the email that is sent,

forgetting to attach *files* in attachments, even some marketing communication user experiences also state that their message was not sent because they forgot to click *send*.

Second, errors in the encryption process. In conventional marketing communication, this happens when the sender chooses the wrong word to convey the message so that the meaning captured by the receiver is different. Another possibility is that the sender of the message has selected the right words but the intonation is not correct. In internet-based marketing communication, this barrier can get worse because messages sent on the internet are only conveyed in text form. *Emoticons*, punctuation, and capital letters can give different meanings [11]. *Emoticons* can complement expressions but the mistakes in choosing emoticons can be fatal. It can also happen if the message is written in capital letters and uses certain punctuation marks that make the message contains different meaning.

Third, many barriers originating from the media are also experienced in communicating. Computer *hangs* and unable to process data is a common and basic barrier. Inappropriate *software* or applications can also be a source of barriers for internet-based marketing communication. Besides, marketing communication is often hampered because internet service providers experience disruption for various reasons.

Fourth, marketing communication barriers occur in the *decoding* interpretation process. This can happen when the recipient of a message encodes the received message using a mental process that is different from the mental process of the sender. Marketing communication barriers can also occur when the sender and recipient of the message do not understand each other's language. For example, when a foreign collaborator says '*lighten up*', maybe the response given by the recipient of the message will be different because the individual doesn't understand the term.

Fifth, other marketing communication barriers that can occur originate from message recipients who are late in receiving them due to various activities. In the era of the internet, although the messages can be sent at any time, the users of marketing communication media with other tasks make them unable to take the time to read messages at the right time. For example, when a teacher is teaching in front of the class, they cannot read the message at least during the learning process.

The final marketing communication barrier can occur because the messages sent are not responded properly. Lately, it often happens when a communicator delivers certain information, the communicant doesn't listen for various reasons. In the information era, there are so many messages sent. This makes technology users experience '*information overload*', which makes communicants unfocused. An example that often occurs, a lecturer delivers the information, sometime later a student asks a question about the content of the information that has just been delivered.

3. Personal Characteristics Barriers

Several studies that have been conducted show that ignorance or misunderstanding is often caused by personal matters of the communicating parties. How does news senders perceive the information they will convey then translate it into marketing communication symbols that can be understood by others. For example, lecturers who will send a message to students about a lecture assignment. They must think first about what information they want to convey [12]. After deciding on some of the information to be conveyed, these lecturers began designing what words they would use to compose their message sentences. If it will be delivered orally, will it be delivered face-to-face? or by phone? If it is decided that the message will be delivered in writing, what media will be used?

The selection of the media needs to consider several things, including: to whom the message is addressed, what type of information to convey, how long it is expected for the recipient of the message to respond back to the message. If a lecturer wants to report about an assignment that must be done immediately, the choice of media will be different if the information that will be shared is about the change of lecture classroom which will be held '*tomorrow morning*'. Information about

lecture assignments may invite questions from students so that the media used should be media that facilitate questions [13]. On the other hand, information about the change of the lecture classroom which will take place 'tomorrow morning' does not require discussion so it can be conveyed via SMS *broadcast* to provide brief information.

After the message is sent, the recipient performs the message interpretation process. As in the first process when the lecturer who will send the message, constructs his thoughts about the message he will send, the student who receives the message will also do the same thing, namely translating the code sent by the lecturer. Uniquely, the message content sent by the lecturer as the same as the message received by the students, however, because the process involved is perception, the same message could be interpreted differently by students [14].

Do misunderstandings in marketing communication occur because of different perceptions? There are three sources of errors in marketing communication, namely personal, physical, and semantic factors. This difference in perception is often be the beginning of misunderstanding. Therefore, several factors that influence this perception need to be examined one by one. Concerning marketing communication in the digital era, each of these factors is discussed based on the changes that have occurred in the digital era [15].

As noted on the previous page, marketing communication involves a great deal of the perceptual process. A perceptual model of the marketing communication process. Several factors that come from things that are personal play an important role when individuals communicate. There are several sources contained in personal factors that can determine the effectiveness of marketing communication. This paper lists the processed results of the two books by combining several sections so that they become more concise [16].

First, the skill in communicating effectively. This skill is often uniquely present within a person. Oral marketing communication is reflected in individuals who can speak fluently, have a rich collection of vocabulary, nonverbal expressions that match the information conveyed, reflect enthusiasm when speaking, and the ability to listen actively to everyone with whom they communicate. This skill allows other people who communicate with them to feel attracted and feel valued.

Second, the background factor of the individual's life. Everyone has different life experiences and parenting. It affects the frame of mind that individuals use when observing the life around them related to relationships with other people. Selection is influenced by the unique experiences that individuals have so far.

Third, stereotypes and prejudices that prevail in the environment influence individual beliefs about a group of people. Usually based on ethnicity, belief, political organization, or other groupings. Currently, generation-based groupings are also happening. Generation X consider that generation Y is different from them because they live in an era of fast-paced information technology so that they do not appreciate the process. These stereotypes cause marketing communication distortions so that they can have undesirable consequences, such as conflicts between groups and difficulties in building trusting relationships. This stereotype exists and cannot be eliminated in society. Marketing communication actors need to be aware of this problem, so that they are aware of any misperceptions that may develop into bigger problems.

The last factor influencing marketing communication is personality. Everyone has their own characteristics, although they can be changed, it takes a relatively long time. There are personality traits known as individuals who are gregarious, love to socialize, and are good at talking. Individuals with extraversion personality traits are good at talking, enjoy socializing, and are not easily offended. Extrovert and introvert individuals do not differ in communicating via internet media, marketing communication barriers can be experienced by individuals with low extraversion personality traits because they tend to wait and are not assertive.

4. Physical Environment Barriers

The condition that is often be the source of marketing communication barrier is the physical environment. The place where the marketing communication takes place, for example, a conversation conducted when an individual is waiting for a bus at a roadside stop so that both parties, both the sender and the recipient of the message, cannot hear the message being conveyed. The physical condition is increasingly unsupportive if the bus stop is full of passengers so that the communicators cannot speak freely [17].

Apart from location, marketing communication is carried out by two people who are on two different continents makes the time difference too large so that the physical conditions of them are different. For example, when *video conferencing* is conducted between a colleague in the USA and Yogyakarta with a difference of 12 hours. The time zone difference that is too large results in differences in the psychological condition of the communicators, on the one hand, it is too early and on the other hand, it is too late.

For marketing communications made with cell phones, the weakened signal is a source of marketing communication barrier. The recipient of the message cannot listen to the message conveyed, either due to sound interference or *delay* the received voice.

5. Semantic Barriers

Repeating the short messages sent by students at the beginning of this paper are concrete example of diction and the use of a language style that is difficult for the recipient to understand. If the student write '*q mo ktm tdtg krs, kpn bs n dmn?*' What does it mean? Likewise in the following message, '*bu, sy mo kslt skrps tp msh g pd, gmn?*'.

After asking another student, it is found that the "q" is "I" while the "mo" is "want". The message sent by the first student asked for the time and place available for him because he wanted to meet the lecturer to ask for the Form of Study Plan (KRS) signature. While the second message contains the student's desire to consult with his lecturer about the thesis he will write but the student is not confident. These two messages are examples of barriers to effective marketing communication caused by the use of jargon that is unique to certain groups of young people.

Another error stems from the vagueness of using words (semantics) in the third message '*... saya kepingin ngobrol tentang beberapa hal*'. What did the student mean by the word 'ngobrol?'. Initially, the student had received a consultation scheduled at 9 o'clock but he did not come because he woke up late. This means that the student should ask him for another schedule for a consultation. Why does he use the word 'ngobrol', which can be understood as a leisure activity, instead of using the word 'consulting' or 'discussion'?

6. Marketing communication Between Generations

Certainly, there is no excuse for not communicating and cooperating, even though when asked about Generation Y, *baby boomers* say that Generation Y are "lazy, rude, too dependent on technology". If we read back the short messages listed at the beginning of this paper, the opinion of the generation X seems quite reasonable.

Generation Y and Z are generations that contain children who are born with technology in their lives. Because technology exists in every line of their lives, the marketing communication pattern of Generation Y is different when compared to the previous generation. In the previous era, parents would teach their children how to cook. If students get group assignments, they will go to a room to work on it together. It is different from generation Y whose life has been facilitated by internet technology [18]. When they will learn to cook, they will *google* for recipes and how to cook them. Famous sites such as <http://www.bonappetit.com> or can be joined by <http://www.1>

langsungenak.com which can be used as a group to learn to cook together. If something is not clear they will write down the questions and someone will give the answer directly [19].

The internet is inseparable from our daily lives. The internet has changed the lifestyle of everyone. If we reread the text of short messages at the beginning of writing, has the internet made marketing communication between people less? Does marketing communication become less formal? "Not at all". The internet has only changed the tendency of individuals to communicate more on a text basis. As stated in 16, the text-based marketing communication tends to be poor and *asynchronous*.

Several things to consider when discussing intergenerational marketing communication [20]. Intergenerational views on others are very important to consider, namely:

- 1) *Baby boomers* view generation X and millennials as a group that lacks discipline and focus. Digital technology makes it easy for text marketing communication to be duplicated and disseminated.
- 2) Generation X see *baby boomers* as a group of parents who do not want to change, like to think dogmatically, sexist, defensive, and less creative. Generation X view Generation Y as arrogant children.
- 3) Generation Y view generation X as a group that lacks problem-solving skills and is slow to respond. Similar to generation X, generation Y also view *baby boomers* as parents who are difficult to change, like to think dogmatically, sexist, defensive, and less creative.

If each generation already feels the difference, a strategy to build marketing communication across generations is something that cannot be denied.

In face-to-face meetings, the following things need to be done:

- 1) Greet those who have arrived first by saying general greetings, for example, 'hello', 'good morning/afternoon / evening'
- 2) Say goodbye when leaving the meeting
- 3) Choose a word that has no double meaning, let alone offensive to other people
- 4) Listen to other people's conversations without interruption
- 5) Do not surf the internet, whether writing or reading e-mails or surfing
- 6) Avoid using cell phones, SMS, and other *instant messaging*

Fine also listed the following suggestions regarding writing messages via Internet-based marketing communication media, as follows:

- 1) Open the message with a short greeting to indicate that the message is addressed to the communicant, not a public message spread by machines
- 2) Use complete sentences
- 3) Avoid abbreviations especially for abbreviations that are not widely known
- 4) Use capital letters and punctuation in the correct places
- 5) When finished writing, we have to double-check whether the spelling is correct or incorrect
- 6) Put a name at the bottom of the message to ensure that the recipient of the message knows that the message has a sender
- 7) If you want to attach information obtained from other sources, include the source or state that the data is obtained from an accountable source.
- 8) If you are going to *share* information, including your short review so that the impression of communicating between people is maintained.

7. Conclusion

Marketing communication is a method for conveying information from one source to another. By marketing communication, knowledge can be spread in all directions. Marketing communication in the technological era can be done easily and quickly. Information and marketing communication technology can almost overcome the barriers that have existed so far due to distance and time.

Conversely, marketing communication that is carried out incorrectly can damage relationships and even brotherhood. As a weapon, it can be used to defend itself and hunt animals for its benefits. But if it is not careful, this weapon can kill your friends.

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