CUSTOMERS INFORMATION BEHAVIOR OF INDONESIAN PERSONAL SHOPPER ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The development of technology has brought a very significant change in the field of marketing. One of the most visible transformations is the growth of digital marketing channel. The online media will facilitate the buyer in choosing the products they want through the online shop. However, there are also customers whom prefer personal shopper services than shopping on the official online store by themselves. This study aims to determine the customers information behavior of Indonesian personal shopper on Instagram by answering some research questions by elaborating Engel, Kollet, Blackwell (EKB) Model and consumer information behavior in the digital environment.

Methodology: This study uses virtual ethnography method. In this study, the researchers conducted observations participatory.

Main Findings: The results show that some of the online customers prefer personal shopper than the product’s official online store because of the personal touch given by personal shopper during the transaction process. In purchasing products, customers have identified their needs, they also have seek for information from several different personal shoppers to reduce asymmetric information, evaluating information, making decision and showing their satisfaction level regarding the services by giving testimonials.

Applications of this study: The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of online business in Indonesia, including in the regulation of online marketing.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Research about the customers information behavior of personal shopper on Instagram in this study is elaborating Engel, Kollet, Blackwell (EKB) Model and customer information behavior in the digital environment.

Keywords: Customer Behavior, Instagram, Personal Shopper Services, Virtual Ethnography, Engel, Kollet, Blackwell (EKB) Model, Information Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has brought a very significant change in the field of marketing. One of the most visible transformations is the growth of digital marketing channel. Digital marketing uses the internet and information technology to enhance and develop the traditional marketing functions (Urban, 2004). Digital marketing is expected to create the value in new ways in the new digital environments (Kannan & Li, 2017; Kurniasih, 2005).

Global Digital Report in 2018 noted that 7.593 billion of the world's population, 4,021 billion inhabitants are internet users or in other words, the internet penetration in the world reaches 53% in 2018 and 3,196 billion of them are social media users. The addition of internet users is followed by the addition of time used by internet users to surf in cyberspace, which is average for 6 hours a day. Meanwhile, the internet users in Indonesia use 3 hours 23 minutes to access the social media (We are Social, Hootsuite, 2018). With the increasing number of the internet users and the time spent for online, the development of online business, especially in social media has increased.

With the values offered by digital marketing, some sellers and customers are turning to digital services, so e-commerce, online shop and online transaction numbers are growing. In Indonesia, the penetration of people using e-commerce with various digital devices reached 40% with an average purchase of 251 USD per consumer in the 3rd quarter of 2017 (GlobalWebIndex, 2017). In relation to e-commerce, based on the survey of Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), Indonesian people use the internet to search the prices (45.15%), purchase information (37.82%), online shopping (32.19) and online (16.83%) (Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association, 2017).

The online media will facilitate the buyer in choosing the products they want through the online shop. However, there are also customers whom prefer personal shopper services than shopping on the official online store by themselves. It shows that consumers need more connections with the seller than with the retailer (Mcdermott, 2017), thus it creates business opportunities for personal shopper.

A personal shopper is a job where people help the others in shopping by advising customers (CTIReviews, 2016). In an interview with a radio, some personal shoppers in Indonesia mentioned that the job of a personal shopper is visiting malls; take photographs of things in the mall, especially the items being discounted or new items; posting photos on Instagram so they can be monitored by followers; checking orders; checking payments; checking the delivery (FeMaleRadio, 2017).
Personal shopper considered as a very helpful services since it helps saving time, money, and energy. Customers can easily browsing the products needed, contacting personal shopper services, transfer the money, and wait for the products arriving home. A personal shopper can also accompany the consumer to shop and to help choose the best product/service for the consumer. Therefore a personal shopper should be able to anticipate, identify and map desires, alternatives, and priorities of consumer desires (Burke, 1999).

From many digital marketing platforms, Instagram becomes one of the options for the sellers and the buyers in conducting the online buying and selling transactions. Indonesia occupies the 3rd position in Instagram usage, after USA and Brazil in first and second place (We are Social, Hootsuite, 2018). This is the necessary capital to get a lot of followers. In trading and selling, Instagram is considered as a platform that can facilitate the process of buying and selling because it can display images, video, and interaction in real-time between the seller and the buyer.

One of the pioneers in the personal shopper’s service on Indonesian website is bistrip.com. The idea of bistrip.com comes from Indonesian students who study abroad (in 2011), namely Willy Eka Salin and Doddy Lukito. Bistrip helps traveler to meet the customers who would like to buy some products through them. Until now Bistrip has 7074 routes with total transactions reaching 968,501 USD (Bistrip.com, 2017). Meanwhile, there are huge numbers of personal shopper services accounts on Instagram. By June 15, 2017 there were 209 accounts using tag #JasaTitip (Personal Shopper) on Instagram. One of the pioneers of personal shoppers on Indonesian Instagram is Bianka Fransiska Siahaan @bugabeebabby. Bianka has been running the business since 2013 and currently has reached turnover around 200 – 400 million rupiahs per month. Bianka admits that initially this personal shopper services was established because of the huge demands. There are many people live out of the town want to buy certain products but facing doubts regard the price differences online, and the authenticity of the goods itself, thus chose to use personal shopper services (BeritaSatu, 2017).

Service quality and personal attention are important factors in the dimensions of customer behavior (Medrano, Olarte-Pascual, Pelegrín-Borondo, & Sierra-Murillo, 2016). Ultimately, technological developments and globalization have implications for the transformation of consumer behavior both at the macro level and at the micro level (II, Forehand, Puntoni, & Warlop, 2012). The importance of consumer behavior study is not only to describe and explain the cause of a consumer's decision, but also can predict and control consumer behavior in the future.

The study of consumer behavior is very broad as people, technology, economy change, etc. This change leads to when, where, which and why the topic is studied (Peighambari, Sattari, Kordestani, & Oghazi, 2016; Deaton & Muellbauer, 2012). Theory of Reasoned Action developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in the 1960s explains that the consumer behavior is influenced by the intention and motivation of the consumer, where the intention and motivation is related to the social attitudes and norms of the individual. This model was developed by Engel, Kollet, Blackwell into EKB Model (Eagle, Dahl, Hill, Sara Bird, & Tapp, 2013).

This study aims to investigate the customer’s behavior of Indonesian personal shopper on Instagram by answering some research questions by elaborating Engel, Kollet, Blackwell (EKB) Model and consumer behavior in the digital environment. This is what will differentiate my research from previous consumer behavior studies. The research question-research question is how customers identify their needs? How consumers gain access and seek for information? How customers evaluating alternatives? How customers decide to buy a product? How customer's behavior in the buying process? How customers behavior after the purchase? The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of online business in Indonesia, including in the regulation of online marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of online business is influenced by the value offered by digital media, namely speed, relevance, and reach of campaigns (Benady, 2014), as a consequence of the values expected by the customer as the outcomes that include value, brand, new mode, balanced relationships, customer satisfaction, leadership spending opinions, confidence, acquisition, retention and profitability (Kannan & Li, 2017; Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013).

In the EKB Model, consumer behavior is divided into five stages, namely the recognize of needs, information search, consideration of various alternatives, purchasing decisions and behavior post purchase by providing an assessment of the product or service that has been used (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2012). However, purchases of goods or services are not always planned. There are times when consumers decide to buy goods or services spontaneously or unplanned. This behavior is called impulse buying. Impulse buying theories was developed by Hawkins Stern. Impulse buying is characterized by a quick purchase decision when consumers see or get a quote on goods or services and want to have it immediately, without thinking of the consequences (Kacen & Lee, 2002; Haussman, 2000). While the differences in the characteristics of online environments and the online environment do not really make consumer behavior too different. In the digital environment, consumer behavior includes access to information, assessment and analysis of information, actions on evaluation results, complaints and redress (compensation/ repayment) and post purchase behaviour (Muller, Damgaard, Litchfield, Lewis, & Hörnle, 2011).

The online consumer behavior currently dominate the research on consumers in general (Foxall, 2017). Tracking the consumer behavior through the websites can predict real activity. This predicting ability is not based on the excellence over
data sources, but rather on speed, convenience, and flexibility across multiple domains (Goel, Hofman, Lahaie, Pennock, & Watts, 2010). A result of research on millennial generation in Washington DC USA says that the frequency of purchasing through the internet has increased. The items purchased by millennials include small items such as the iPhone to large items such as large ships and work trucks that cost thousands of dollars (Pimentel, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses virtual ethnography method. Briefly, ethnography is a qualitative research method where researcher participates directly to get the details of events in the society daily live. Virtual ethnography is an ethnography research within online environment or virtual world as the research site. Ethnography on the internet (virtual) can see how the technology is used in detail (Hine, 2000, p. 63). On the virtual ethnography, the ethnographer (researcher) can gather data from the online environment and using the method of data collection computer-based. Briefly, the stages in this research can be seen in Figure 1:

![Figure 1: Phases on Virtual Ethnography Research](image)

From figure 1 it can be seen that after identifying the problem and designing the research design, the researcher identified the online environment in Instagram and chose a unit of analysis in research. In this study, the researchers conducted observations participatory. As for the object of research is the customer or potential customer of personal shopper that interacts directly with the Indonesian personal shopper through the Instagram. Instagram accounts of personal shopper in this research are selected based on the query #JasaTitip (Personal Shopper). Up to 10 June 2018, there 2,435,454 public posts using the hashtag tag #JasaTitip. The sample in this study selected from the photo with the most number of comments and are on the top 50 post. After doing research based on the principle of virtual ethnography, researchers organize findings to create categories of the conclusions and then perform the analysis of initial results of the study.

Validity in research carried out with the triangulation theory. Theory of triangulation to compare the field data with theoretical perspective in order not to occur the bias upon the results of research and deepen understanding about the results of the study (Rahardjo, 2010). The results of the initial analysis, the results of the triangulation accompanied the interpretation of the data is then processed to produce a general conclusion.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

As has been submitted to the Part of the Introduction. Research about the customer’s behavior of personal shopper on Instagram is elaborating Engel, Kollet, and Blackwell (EKB) Model and customer behavior in the digital environment.
Each research question can be further elaborated as follows:

1. **Customers Behavior in Recognizing the Needs of the Product**

The results showed that the customers already know the products they were looking for when they contact the account of a personal shopper. This is evident from the questions asked by consumers in the comments column, such as “Is there a dress-shirt or kaftan for Eid?”, “Hi, could you please update the stock of sandals?”, “Sis, I ever seen a table like this, but the price is Rp.1.300.000,-, is it still there?” These questions indicate that potential buyers are already recognizing the need for products that are needed. In recognizing their needs on products or services, consumers are usually influenced by the individual aspects and environmental aspects. The individual aspects include the resources of the consumer, motivation, knowledge, personality, lifestyle and demographics, while the environmental aspects include culture, social class, the influence of personal, family and situations (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001). Sometimes we encounter customers who do not intend to buy a product, then be interested in buying because they see a photo of an attractive product, the price discount or read the testimony that is better than other customers. Situations make people do impulsive buying (Akram, Hui, Khan, Yan, & Akram, 2018). The discount price and display an attractive be a significant factor in impulsive buying (Ahmed & Parmar, 2013). According to the personal shoppers, the discounts price and attractive displays are the main factors in impulsive buying (BeritaSatu, 2017; FeMaleRadio, 2017; NET-TV, 2015). Customer behavior in recognizing the need on a product in the online shop can be described as shown in Figure 2.

![Customer Need Recognition](image)

**Figure 2: Customers Behavior in Recognizing the Needs of the Product in Instagram**

From figure 1 it can be seen that personally, the consumer identify their needs with attention to the needs, character, motivation, financial ability, lifestyle, knowledge, preferences, and demographics. Environmental factors such as trend, social environment, reference social, culture and social class affect the consumer in identifying their needs. Meanwhile, the display and the description of the product, the availability of a new product and in-discount, as well as recommendations from the seller and other buyers when communication occurs with the prospective consumer, can be affected. Furthermore, to convince the products to be purchased by the desired, potential buyers dig more in-depth information about the product by asking about the size, color, material, motif/design, brand, prices or other photos that more clearly.

2. **Customers Behavior in Accessing and Searching for Information**

Search for information about products/services by the customer begins with the stimuli. As has been described in the previous section, incentives can be from self, exposure to environments and also situations. Stimuli become the basis of the consumer in identify needs. Information search by consumers in Instagram usually begins with a search for information about products and personal shoppers accounts. Consumers who are interested in the products photos then leave a comment on the picture of the product. In such conditions, the consumer must use a private channel that is used by the personal shopper. Some of the personal shoppers do not answer inquiries on Instagram comment column and refer their customers to address the inquiries directly to their personal contact, such as direct message, WhatsApp, or line. However, sometimes consumers do not read these terms or not agree to contact the personal shopper through a private channel, so they protest by writing a message in the comments column, for instance, “Why no respond?”

The decision of personal shopper to not reply to messages from consumers through the column of comment is unfavorable since the reason of choosing Instagram as personal shoppers’ media is to be able to interact directly with customers, where the personal shopper provides personal service, give a touch of humanity on the customer. Based on the experience of
some of the personal shoppers, the customers use their services because customers want to shop with the assistance of man, not the admin (BeritaSatu, 2017; FeMaleRadio, 2017). In brief, the customers’ behavior in accessing and looking for information on the personal shopper accounts on Instagram can be seen in Figure 3.

![Information Search by Consumers](Image)

**Figure 3: Customers Behavior in Accessing and Searching for Information on Instagram**

The information provided by the personal shoppers will affect the purchase behavior. Consumers will focus on the available information, such as on price, efficiency or other attributes. The information that is commonly asked by customers is the manufacturer of the product, availability of product, postage, fee services, delivery location, the delivery, the completeness of the product, the amount of the discount of the product, receipt number, price, etc. On the other hand, information of products/services can reduce the gap in consumer behavior caused by a lack of information or time pressure. In the end information of product/service can change consumer attitudes to the environment, such as being energy saving, etc. (Leenh leer, Elsen, Mikola, Wagt, & Lloyd, 2014). On the user services of the personal shopper on Instagram, customers can find information about products and services offered either through personal shoppers or through testimonials from other consumers.

### 3. Customers Information Behavior in Evaluating Alternatives

Several factors become the basis of the consumer in evaluating the alternatives, namely the belief, attitude, intention (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001), simplicity, usability, and convenience (Wa, 2014). On Instagram, customers seek for information regarding the product by viewing several different personal shopper accounts. Most customers contact a few of the personal shoppers as well as to determine the suitability of the information displayed with the real products, product quality, customer service and relative price, especially the cost of services and shipping cost. The customers behavior has changes, wherein the previous generation, customers focus on the social responsibility of a brand, while the current generation is more sensitive to price and value of the products or services (Mcdermott, 2017). Regarding price, customers will usually choose the lowest rates. Sometimes, customers contact several different personal shoppers to compare prices and by the end chose the cheapest one. This kind of attitude is unfavourable for the personal shoppers, some of them get furious then upload the screenshot of their conversation with this type of customer and stating their disappointment of how this particular customer has wasted their time asking long inquiries but end up order from another personal shopper.

In the structure of prices, perception of quality of products/services and interest in the ads featuring a big discount can become a mediator in the purchase decision for the consumer (Isabella, Pozzani, Chen, & Gomes, 2012). It is different from loyal customers. Loyal customers will still use the same personal shopper even though other personal shopper provide promotions such as discount or free services cost and shipping cost. To maintain customer loyalty in the online environment then the personal shoppers must provide services that simplify the customer, provide quality and understandable information, ensure the security and privacy of customers and offer services that make the consumer comfortable to trade with them (Wa, 2014).

### 4. Customers Information Behavior in Making Decision

Customer's decision to purchase a product using a personal shopper on Instagram is influenced by internal and external stimuli. These internal and external stimuli are the exposure to information, the response of the personal shopper, the perception and acceptance of products and services by consumers.

Firstly, consumers will focus on the photo of the product/service, then read the description/ information that is displayed in the pictures, call and see the response given by the personal shopper, have a perception of products and services and if the consumer can accept it, the consumer will continue with the purchase transaction.
Customers tend to choose to buy a product when they find a rational price, usually the lowest price and discount products, friendly services, a product that is becoming a trend and the product needed.

When the customer decides to buy a product, there are customers who directly write in the comments that she ordered these products but most of the other customers usually contact the personal shopper contact person, such as through a Direct Message, WhatsApp or Line. Sometimes, customers’ personal messages on direct message not directly replied by the personal shopper, thus they leave a comment on the picture, for example, “Hi, please check your WhatsApp”, or “I have transferred the money” or “Kindly read my Line to you”, etc. Personal shopper then usually responds with “Sorry, slow respond because of too many chats coming in, being sick, was making recaps”, etc. Some of the customers tag friends or colleagues to inform that they are interested in it or asking to buy it for them. Decision making process initially starts with feeling, emotion, and a set of values that generate perception, attitude then behavior (Rajagopal, 2015).

Trust, price and convenience things that will make someone decide to buy a product or service. In general, trust is greatly affects consumers in making decisions (Pimentel, 2015) but for students, price is the deciding factor in consumer decisions (Hasslinger, Hodzic, & Opazo, 2007). To help consumers making decisions, online sellers in Europe usually simplify the choice by providing similar products alternatives in the online store (Leenheer, Elsen, Mikola, Wagt, & Lloyd, 2014).

5. Post-Purchase Customer Information Behavior of a Personal Shopper

The expression of the customers after the purchase is associated with satisfaction and dissatisfaction of customers. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction of customers post-purchase depending on they are met or not the expectations before the purchase. There are two kinds of expectations namely the level of the ideal standard and limit of tolerance at least (Santos & Boote, December 2003). If the product/services received does not meet the minimum tolerance limit, then the customer will be disappointed. On the other hand, if the product/services received can meet the ideal standard then it will lead to satisfaction; or at least if it can reach the tolerance limits at a minimum, then the customer will be able to accept it.

Most of the customers of personal shopper on Instagram give testimony by writing it in the comment field of the photo that has been purchased. When the customers satisfy, the testimonials include the unboxing product, or by wearing the product, along with personal thank you notes, for instance, “The product is good, no flaws, the service is great, I am really satisfied with the service of Shint_Store, I will make another order next time”. When the services are unsatisfying, customers will post in the comment column regarding their disappointment. Customer disappointment is usually caused by processing booking that long, the message from customers has not been read, the order hasn't arrived yet, the tracking number is slow, the product received is different with photos, etc. The disappointment testimonials such as, “Hey, please respond my Line since I do not get my order yet”, to which replied by the personal shopper “I have sent you the delivery notes number, please check it”. However, the customer was not satisfied yet and replied back “I got it but the product has not arrived yet till now. Maybe this online shop does not care whether their delivery has arrived or not”. When the problem of delivery of the goods is not yet resolved, the customer then wrote the message, “I have let go the product which has not arrived. I donate it to you. Thank you for not minding my complaint. Hope your business is running well.” This conversation has shown how the personal shopper did not try to build good relationship with the customer. In fact, according to some of the personal shoppers, that the most significant asset of a personal shopper is customers’ trust and testimonials (BeritaSatu, 2017).

Poor testimony from customers who have used the services of a personal shopper will affect the perceptions and purchasing decisions in other prospective customers. For example, because the account of a personal shopper mostly set to public, then complaints of customers can be read by everyone who has an Instagram account. In the case above, there was another prospective customer post a respond to the customer testimony, “You have not send the product, do you?” It is shown how customers’ testimonials will indeed affect other customers or prospective customers to do transaction with this current personal shopper. Some of the personal shoppers create another account to re-gram the testimonials and some others only use hastag “testimony” without creating another account.

Figure 4 shows post-purchase customer behavior of a personal shopper on Instagram. Figure 4 shows that post-purchase, either satisfied or dissatisfied customers usually provide their testimony. Some testimonials get feedback from personal shopper and some others do not. Feedback from a personal shopper can resolve complaints; some other can't resolve the complaint. Then the customers give testimonials back and these testimonials can show whether the consumer will remain to be loyal customers or switch to other personal shopper.

CONCLUSION

Some of online customers prefer the personal shopper than the product’s official online store product because of the personal touch is given by personal shopper. In purchasing products, customers have identified their needs, they also have seek for information from several different personal shoppers to reduce asymmetric information, evaluating information, making decision and showing their satisfaction level regarding the services by giving testimonials.
LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This research has used virtual ethnographic methods. Further research needs to be done using other methods, such as survey methods to find a model of shopper's personal behavior more generally.

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