

Interactional Communication in Developing Digital Marketing during Pandemic Era

Damayanti Wardyaningrum^{a)}, Ramadhanty Pratiwi, Elin Fitriyanti, Priska Febi Hikmawati, Rafi Herjuno

¹ Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

^{a)} Author correspondence: damayanti@uai.ac.id

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18196/km.18255>

Article Info

Article history:

Received 26 Mar 2023

Revised 15 May 2023

Accepted 20 May 2023

ABSTRACT

The digital era has brought a massive impact on business development in Indonesia., However, the Covid-19 pandemic has crushed almost all small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and they are currently trying to stand and rise again in the post-pandemic. This study aims to identify the business development process in SMEs by using digital methods carried out by youth groups in pandemic situations from interactional communication perspectives. The concept used in this study is an interactional communication model with the element of individual meaning toward the social environment and individual field of experience. This research method is descriptive qualitative through *focused group discussion* (FGD). The result found that from the interactional communication process, the meaning interpreted by the group member toward their social environment was the identification of a number of problems faced by the SME owner. Other than that, there was also the meaning-making about building enterprises by utilizing digital media for marketing, especially in creating a platform for content management. Groupmembers' different field of experience has brought opportunities to respond to eachother's problem. There are also opportunities to create a new network and collaboration in searching for a solution to build a business with a digital marketing method.

Keywords: Interactional Communication; Young Generation; Digital Business

ABSTRAK

Era digital memberikan dampak yang besar terhadap perkembangan bisnis di Indonesia Namun pandemi covid-19 telah menghantam hampir semua bisnis termasuk bisnis usaha mikro kecil dan menengah (UMKM) yang kini berupaya bertahan dan bangkit dalam situasi pasca pandemi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi proses pengembangan bisnis UMKM yang menggunakan metode digital dan dijalankan oleh satu kelompok generasi muda dalam situasi pandemic dari perspektif komunikasi interaksional. Konsep yang digunakan adalah model komunikasi interaksional dengan elemen makna individu terhadap lingkungan sosial dan bidang pengalaman individu. Metode penelitian yang dikualitatif deskriptif melalui *focused group discussion* (FGD). Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa dari proses komunikasi interaksional makna yang diperoleh anggota kelompok terhadap lingkungannya yang merupakan generasi muda adalah identifikasi terhadap sejumlah persoalan yang dihadapi pemilik usaha kecil dan makna tentang membangun usaha dengan menggunakan media digital untuk pemasaran khususnya seputar pembuatan platform hingga pengelolaan konten. Bidang pengalaman anggota kelompok yang berbeda membuka kesempatan bagi anggota kelompok untuk saling merespon masalah, terdapat peluang terbentuknya jaringan baru dan berkolaborasi dalam mencari solusi untuk membangun bisnis dengan metode pemasaran digital

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Interaksional; Generasi Muda; Bisnis Digital

INTRODUCTION

The Covid -19 pandemic has undesirably impacted the sustainability of Small - Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Based on the survey of Lembaga Penyelidikan Ekonomi dan Masyarakat Universitas Indonesia (Board of Economic and Society Investigation of Universitas Indonesia) and the United Nations of Development Program (UNDP) in 2020, more than 88 percent of SMEs experienced a decrease in profit margins from early of a pandemic until August 2020 (LPEM FEB UI & UNDP, 2020)

From the Ministry of Cooperative and Small Medium Enterprises data in 2018, the Medium Enterprises (60.702 units) absorbed 3.770.835 people or about 3.13% of the workforce. Meanwhile, Small Enterprises (783.132 unit) has taken 5.831.256 people or about 4.84% workforce, and Micro Enterprises (63.350.222 unit) has absorbed at least 107.376.540 people or approximately 89.04% of the workforce (Azizah et al., 2020).

SMEs are the kind of economy that is mostly impacted by Covid-19 but, at the same time, are also considered the most adaptable ones with their innovative products. This is because some have applied digital marketing in selling their products. On another side, the industry that was able to sustain during Covid -19 is industry related to basic needs like electricity,

clean water, agriculture, farming, plantation, fishery, automotive, and banking. Meanwhile, the industry that has developed much during the pandemic were food, pharmacy, information, and communication technology (Rosita, 2020).

One publication regarding Small and Medium Enterprises SMEs is in Krebet Tourism Village in Yogyakarta, and the dynamics of its villagers can be identified. Interesting points found from this study include (1) understanding of citizens about the importance of brands in business activities; (2) understanding of collective brands; (3) dynamics in building collective brands as a way to develop the potential of the tourist village (Widyastuti et al., 2018).

Among those entrepreneurs who tried to adapt during Covid-19 are young people. Z-Generation, or Gen Z, was born between 1997 and 2012 when digital innovation and information evolved and advanced. They found it easy to get information about products and trends on social media. Generation Z is Indonesia's largest demography, making up 27.94 percent of the population (Statistik, 2021). According to Frey as Statistics Indonesia (2021), in the 2020 Population Census, Generation Z was born during 1997-2012.

According to Act No 40 of 2009 on Youth, young entrepreneurs are 16-30 years old and organize factors of production, nature, workforce, capital, ability, and skills for production to get revenue. The significant number of young entrepreneurs in Indonesia is a positive sign of the country's development. The data of Indonesian entrepreneurs is only 0,18% of the total population or equivalent of 400.000 people. In 2010 the total number of entrepreneurs rose to 0,24%. In January 2012, the number increased to 1,56% or equivalent of 3,75 million people. (Kurniawan & Wibowo, 2015) .

The digital era has greatly impacted everyday life, including the business sphere. Without big capital and working place, everybody can lead their business only by using internet. This phenomenon was marked by the robust online business carried out by the young generation by optimizing opportunities and expressing their creative ideas. The online business is very attractive for people nowadays; everything can be done easily. People can just stay at home yet still be able to generate valuable income. Moreover, with the nature of online shopping, this online business has even attracted more people. The information is also easily accessed by social media channels like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or even searching at Google. Below is the list of the top 10 e-commerce in Indonesia in 2020:



Figure 1. The list of top 10 e-commerce in Indonesia in 2020

Indonesia owns a broad market because of the benefits of its demography. Soon, Indonesia will reach its demographic bonus as the number of youth and productive people peaks. However, the number of productive age youth also presents challenges as the pandemic disaster strikes the world and the country.

Furthermore, the researchers summarized some previous research about the digital business of young people. Maryati and Masriani mentioned in their publication that digital technology has allowed youth to build businesses independently. By utilizing social media, these young people can run their businesses and get their income to meet their life demands. This study recommends that for the economy of society to improve, there should be a digital technology training program for the young people in the village that will impact the growing number of entrepreneurs so the village's economy will bloom (Maryati & Masriani, 2019).

Another study in Tabalong Regency found that the digital business strategy could be an alternative defensive strategy for SMEs during the Covid-19 pandemic by encouraging participation stakeholders like the company, local government and universities to partner with SMEs in digital transformation. The SMEs players are selling their products through e-commerce because today's customers have shifted to the online market. Product marketing has utilized digital technology or digital marketing to reach more consumers online through delivery order (Avriyanti, 2021).

Passion to build the business on the three series of entrepreneur are 1) product creation and development, 2) business establishment, and 3) business development. Personal, environment, and attitude influence business passion (Merieska & Meiyanto, 2019). An important activity in digital marketing is also conducted to shift the students' perspective in maximizing the use of technology as a tool to be an entrepreneur by building social media marketing and creating an application that can serve as a business opportunity. This should not require big capital because they can join cooperation and be facilitated by Kamar Dagang dan Industri Kota Tangerang Selatan (Chamber of Trade and Industry) (Ambarwati & Sobari, 2020).

Another relevant publication is about communication strategy through digital marketing conducted by the coffee home industry 'Cahaya Robusta Sumbawa'. With the internet, they also promoted products. The effectiveness of using it can be seen through some of the benefits of using digital media marketing, for example the easiness in the introduction, sales, and communication. It is expected that digital marketing not only focuses on Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube but also collaborates with social media by using other applications like Websites, Blog, Shopee, and others. (Dermawansyah & Rizqi, 2021). Sarastuti's research that supports the earlier studies was that the marketing communication strategy conducted by Muslim Fashion by focusing on selling promotion and banner advertising on social media like Facebook, then visual communication factor and recommendation also influences the increase of brand awareness. However, there should also be a person in charge of handling the online media (Sarastuti, 2017).

Another finding regarding digital marketing communication on the Amazara brand could complete the previous research. Some factors have become obstacles in accelerating digital communication marketing like the message accuracy perceived by consumers, consumer's doubt in accepting information, budget limitation, and difficulty in integrating marketing communication in each communication channel. Therefore, it is recommended that a long-term digital communication

strategy should be created (Sari & Utami, 2021). These are related to other publications about promoting digital communication in the tourism context. Instagram, as a social media based on visual sharing features, is appropriate utilized as a medium to promote tourism potential, especially in Yogyakarta, given the tendency of its engagement is organic to motivate Instagram users to visit tourism potentials, as is conducted @explorejogja for tourism potential in the Yogyakarta region (Amalia & Sudiwijaya, 2020).

From Rosita's (2010) publication, it was concluded that SMEs are the kind of economic activities that were severely impacted by covid-19 pandemic, but they were considered able to adapt their businesses with innovative products. This happened because they used a digital marketing strategy in selling their product. On another side, the kind of industry that survived during covid-19 pandemic was industries related to basic needs fulfillment like electricity, clean water, agriculture, farming, fishery, automotive, and banking. Some industries also flourished during the the pandemic, such as food, pharmacy, information technology, and communication enterprises (Rosita, 2020).

Practically speaking, having a business during the digital era was not simple, as many things should be considered. One of the most fundamental aspects to consider was the fresh idea as to how to answer people's demands in a better way. To create this new idea, creativity also played a vital role. Other competencies required were the ability to organize, and the business system should be taken seriously, for example, how to manage the supply and consumers. In managing social media, the business owner should be able to decide how to sell products to attract followers through the picture, caption, and description of the products offered. Business owners should also watch for the market situation by analyzing competitors and understanding the price that is adjusted with the target market.

These ideas were supported by a study about the impeding factors for the entrepreneur. Some of the most common challenges were the lack of investment, the poor economy that caused the slowing down of people's purchasing power, lack of skills, tight competition, the product or service quality, as well as marketing and finding the right place to start the business. It was suggested that young entrepreneurs should level up their creative thinking ability to create innovative products (Fathkhurahman et al., 2018).

Other than the condition mentioned above, the covid-19 pandemic could also be challenging for young entrepreneurs nowadays. From one of the earlier studies in agribusiness, the covid-19 pandemic has stopped the operational activities in Agro Store for four months, impacting a number of problems like the decrease in selling numbers. In facing those challenges, WhatsApp's digital platform has become the alternative platform for selling vegetables and fruits online. Another challenge was the lack of human resources and transportation and customer complaints. This study recommended young entrepreneurs stay consistent in using digital platforms as marketing media for fruits and vegetable products as the opportunity to expand the market and improve the selling rate (Zebua & Sunaryanto, 2021). Maharani also emphasized how digital marketing significantly improved SMEs' existence in Indonesia (Maharani et al., 2022).

Based on previous studies, the digital business phenomenon in the young generation has not been studied from its process. This is important to serve as reference for other parties who want to develop a similar business model. One of the studies about digital business development can be seen from the communication model approach because the business development process is closely related to the interaction process between individuals and groups. Therefore, one of the communication models that is considered suitable for studying group dynamics of young people in building a digital business is the interactional communication model.

The pattern of the interactional communication model emphasized the two-way communication between communicators. The communication occurred from the sender to receiver dan from receiver to sender. The interactional perspective illustrated that someone could be a sender or receiver in one interaction but cannot be both simultaneously. Other than that, the elements in the interactional communication pattern are namely: feedback or response to a message. Feedback can be verbal, non-verbal, deliberative, or non-deliberative (West & Turner, 2018). Interactional communication is one of communication that emphasizes on feedback or response. The process happens when individuals use symbols to create meaning within their environment. Interactional communication is the process in which there were meaning exchange with the feedback that connects the receiver and sender. The process of reciprocity in communication is called feedback. Feedback is communication done by the receiver of message to the sender to show understanding.

Furthermore, West and Turner also explained the interactional communication model that highlighted the two-way direction process between communicator and communicant, which reminded

us of how the communication model is always ongoing (West & Turner, 2018). This interactional perspective illustrated that someone could be both sender and receiver in one interaction but cannot play both roles at the same time. In this model, it can be understood that when two people are communicating, if the first person acts as the sender of the message, the second person acts as the receiver, and vice versa. One of the most important elements in the interactional communication model is feedback. Feedback for the message can be verbal or non-verbal, deliberative or non-deliberatively. Feedback is also useful to help communicators know whether their message has been understood much the meaning-making

Through the interactional communication model, the research about young people groups can be explored by using the elements in the communication process; therefore, it would create a more comprehensive description of how the creation and development of the business process happened. The Covid-19 pandemic experienced the world has enriched the context of communication research on the scope of business processes. Moreover, the disaster situation often has a long-term impact; thus, more agility was required to survive and bounce back compared to normal situations.

The interactional communication model has emphasized several aspects. According to this model, human beings act based on the meaning they have given to their social environment. The meaning correlates directly to the social interaction of individual with their social surrounding. The meaning was created, defended, and changed through the interpretation process done by individuals when they are connected with their social environment.

From the researcher's perspective, interactional communication is in line with the two-way communication process. The two-way interactive communication model is also a model that could pay attention to user segmentation as the development component. The Melhate opinion highlighted communication development which is also crucial to see the emphasis on grassroots participation or marginal groups (Amina, 2017).

One study about interactional communication model in the education context noted that there is an influence between teachers' creativity in teaching and interactional communication with the student achievement. Both creativity and interactional communication simultaneously create a strong influence (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2019).

Furthermore, there is an explanation from another researcher that the theory of information process and interactional communication have created one effective learning method. This model consists of six elements. They are principle, syntax, evaluation, planning, social system, instructional impact, and accompanying effect (Fauziya, 2013).

From one of communication research between parents and children who used interactional communication, it was found that there was significant positive relation between communication and self-efficacy in terms of work readiness. The higher the interactional communication between parents and children, the higher the children's self-efficacy in terms of work readiness. The contribution that interactional communication makes to self-efficacy in work readiness is important (S. Amalia & Dewi, 2013)

Another research that aligns with the interactional communication model has explored the indicators in which the communication process occurred. The message conveyed in education is called feedback when it is a response to the sender's message and affects the receiver's following behavior. Interactional communication can be measured through five indicators: First, response (a) verbal or non-verbal response, (b) confidence in expressing an opinion. Secondly, openness which includes (a) teacher's willingness to honestly comment on what students have expressed, (b) the teacher's willingness to acknowledge and accept the students' perspective. Thirdly, meaning exchange which includes (a) teacher's willingness to listen to students' opposite opinion, (b) teacher's willingness to change position if the situation suggested so. Fourthly, positive attitudes (a) positive attitudes towards students, (b) support the students positively. Fifthly, the egalitarian attitude, in which there are (a) balance between teacher and student in speaking their minds, (b) balance for teacher in listening to the students (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2019).

Studies on interactional communication should look at several communication model suggested by Schramm (West & Turner, 2018). This communication model introduced the idea that the similarity in the field of experience and target are the things that are being communicated. The particular part of signal is what the source and target believed. In the end, the field of experience of each person will affect their ability to communicate with others. Each individual brings their own unique experience to communicate in each episode. These experiences will often affect

communication between one another. The experience will also determine how one person will maintain their relationship with others.

From previous research, this study has novelty in the newly chosen topic of digital business development that young people did during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research uses the elements of the interactional communication concept that focus on the meaning given by individuals towards their social environment and the field of experience they have.

METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method by collecting data through focus group discussion (FGD). This method is based on the informant's characteristics and the problems that will be researched. The qualitative descriptive methods used data collection to explain the phenomenon. The collection of data sources is conducted with a purposive or snowball sampling technique. The collection technique is conducted by triangulation, with inductive data analysis or qualitative. Thus, the result of qualitative research stressed more on the meaning rather than generalization (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). In this study, there is an issue that has been the needs of the informants, which is how to develop business using digital marketing. This is in line with the explanation from Stacks that the focus group is required to direct the group member on certain issues by asking the problems group members to discuss further and see various opportunities until they find the solution (Stacks, 2017)

The qualitative approach has several purposes describing reality as it is contextually, telling things as they are, exploring, obtaining meaning, finding in-depth understanding about something, and understanding theory. Moreover, in qualitative research, the result does not come from statistical procedures or other quantification methods (Yusuf, 2017).

The FGD members in this research are 15 people, 6 out of 15 people categorized as young people. These six people are young generation who built their SMEs a few years before the Covid-19 pandemic. The owners of these business come from a number of places and not only from Jabodetabek. They are also from Bangkalan Madura, Sumatera, Lombok, and Kalimantan. Meanwhile the member of the discussion group is the group of students who live in Jabodetabek that has experience in creating platform and as consumers of digital marketing. FGD was conducted through four stages. The first stage is the identification of the needs of young generation as the SMEs entrepreneur. The second stage is discussion on the creation of digital marketing account. The third stage is discussion on content creation. The fourth stage is discussion on digital platform that was successfully made by each member.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted FGD on a group consisting of young people with certain interest and needs to develop digital marketing. The age of the members was 18-23, comprised of two kinds of groups: one with business and another with knowledge in digital marketing management. The group of businessmen is six persons who have started their businesses in various fields like Muslim fashion, photocopy service, stationery products, and souvenirs. This businessman group has an education background at high school or vocational school and has taken entrepreneurship training in one Islamic boarding school for half a year. They lived in Kalimantan, Lombok, Sumatera and Madura.

Another group member is young people with knowledge and experience in digital marketing. This second group has a bachelor's degree and lived in Jakarta. The things in common with member groups are namely age and experience in education or training institutions.

From FGD process the first step was about problem mapping that was conveyed by the member of SMEs member group. In the next step of FGD, several problems have been identified to be solved by offering the solutions. On further discussion, there was intensifying interaction. At the last step of FGD, there was a model of digital business development expected by young entrepreneurs who have the needs to build digital businesses.

A number of concepts were discussed in the introduction. The researcher tried to formulate that this study would analyze how the interactional process took place in a group. The method of interactional communication is using the elements of individual meaning toward their social environment and the field of experience of the group members.

The first element of interactional communication is the individual meaning towards their social environment. In the interactional communication model, meaning was created, defended and changed by the process of interpretation done by individual as long as it is connected with social environment. Other than that, the reciprocity or response in the interactional communication process in which individuals use symbols to create meaning towards their environment.

On the interactional communication process through the FGD process, it was found that each group got the new meaning of digital business. **The first meaning**, is a number of troubles faced by the member of the group of SMEs. Some have a problem with the lack of capital, lack of models in the fashion business, tools, and equipment that should have created a more efficient business. Another problem is the availability of raw materials because of some hassles in getting them and not having any work partner. Regarding product marketing, the scope is still limited to the nearby area, and they do not have a proper place for a photo product setting. When they were about to promote their product online, these young entrepreneurs did not have a good signal network and product delivery service. There was no expedition service in the area. Therefore, they had to go to another area when they needed to deliver the product. These SMEs entrepreneurs also wanted to have partner who can support their business. Partner is required to assist them in developing their business because they feel like they did not have sufficient knowledge to expand their business digitally. On the other side, the pandemic situation has caused a decrease in people purchasing power and somehow that led to necessity to the change of marketing methods from traditional to digital. Therefore, the group has the map about the business development problems that came from an entrepreneur group member.

Two of the member group discussion (MR and RA) stated below:

..... we have some problem delivering product to our customer since there are no delivery services around here and we have to go to the town. It causes some additional cost to our product so that we can't compete with others.

Another problem is the telecommunication infrastructure that is not supporting us enough. Compared to other locations, especially in Jakarta or Jawa, we need support in connection facilities to our customer or supplier.

From their statement, we could get some description about some supporting facilities they need for their business running.

The second meaning acquired from interactional communication is that for the discussion group member among university students in Jakarta. All the problems experienced by the member of business people from outside Jakarta were probably unimaginable. This is because the business infrastructure in Jakarta was sufficient, and distribution channels were available, including those that can support the speed of product delivery. The availability of digital media promotion was not enough if not supported by sufficient distribution infrastructures. The problem faced by the entrepreneurs was the delay in product delivery or even the inability to reach customers.

In the interactional communication group, a meaning was found about the process of small business from the upstream to the downstream. From the time product is produced until customer receives them, an entrepreneur can see market opportunities if they understand their consumers' needs. By using digital media marketing now, the consumers' dynamics can also be understood by producers and marketers from time to time. Not only that, but they can also see the change in consumers' tastes and competitors from the same business.

One of the member group discussions from SMEs (AJ) stressed discussion about the business situation in the digital era :

"..... in this digital era, of course we are very lucky if we could have an opportunity to develop our customer widely. We know that from digital or online sales,, the target customer could see our product easily and fast. We also could see what our competitors do at this time. This would be very important for us as a businessman for monitoring the customer and competitor"

The third meaning found was about the motivation for entrepreneurship. The process of running a business was sometimes under unpleasant circumstances with no other option to survive. With many limitations of opportunity and lack of capital, some of businessmen tried to move forward and expand their business. On the other side, the entrepreneur group also sees that student member group who have the the opportunity to continue their study at the university in Jakarta have more chances to get practical knowledge in a more structured way as well as exposure to numerous communities during their study time in university. This gives fresh perspective that the future for young generation opens numerous opportunities and plenty of times for them to explore many possibilities.

The fourth meaning develops from other problems, such as how to give solutions for the problems found by choosing the right marketplace that is most suitable for the product offered. In some available marketplaces, the group members discuss many things and take examples from some marketplaces that have been chosen. At this stage, the new meaning for group members includes platform making and digital content creation as well as giving solutions to every problem in building a business using digital media. The need of group members regarding information about the process of content creation in digital media have been fulfilled. From the creation process, management and information, there are more benefits that the group member can get from digital media rather than conventional media.

Fifth, there is new meaning acquired from the interactional communication process about the related symbols regarding the phrases of digital marketing. The group members were introduced to various kinds of social media like Instagram, *Tiktok*, and Youtube as promotion media, how to manage and develop social media campaigns, and the creative thinking process using various references. Besides, interactive communication enabled groups to prioritize ethics and good attitude when delivering messages in social media to promote their business and get basic knowledge about design and photography. The group member also shared knowledge and experience about how to serve customers, which sometimes, as businessmen, they have to face many pressures of demands and tight deadlines.

One of the group discussion members of student TW stated:

"..... from these discussion process in more than three times we are very thank full in having some experiences from our new friend of the student from university in Jakarta. Our knowledge in business is much more important when we have new information especially in developing on line business. Another important thing is we have new relation that we could contact for further occasion in asking about on line busines".

RP, one of the student members stated regarding the process of creating media on line:

"... we are trying to share our experience and knowledge in building the on line trading. We start by identifying a suitable marketplace for the SME and build some content for promoting their customized product. These group discussions give us many new experience in building relation with peers group from different area and different culture in Indonesia".

Student EF:

." We are listening to them and this is very amazing. They are very tough and strong in building their new business with many obstacles. This would motivate us as students in Jakarta with so many supporting facilities from the government for creating a busines".

This research also found the next element of interactional communication related to the experience field they have. **First**, even with various experience and individual's backgrounds of different group members, all group members have something in common: business development through digital media. Interactional communication has opened opportunities for young entrepreneurs to get good networking. Collaboration can occur in different social environments because they are willing to share their experience and teach each other about the spirit of building business despite numerous constraints. Difference social environment also describes that building a business requires continuous efforts, persistence, and innovation. During a hard situation like a pandemic, other than trying to survive, these young entrepreneurs should collaborate to strengthen each other and to get new opportunities,

RF from student member stated:

From our discussion, we could see the same perspective even though we come from different backgrounds (student and businessmen). We are very concerned about online business that exponentially affects many businesses. Being a part of digital business would be an advantage for us as young generation. Hopefully, we are not only as consumer of online trading, but we could be apart of the business player. So, it is very important to build collaboration between businessmen and content creators.

Secondly, from the interactional communication process, the group members' field of experience was new knowledge for group members about business development by using digital media as marketing development. The young generation was considered to have more knowledge and experience in the field of digital business to give opportunities for them to build wider social interaction compared to their current social environment.

Meanwhile, even though the student group has not started their business yet, they already have experience creating digital accounts to support their business promotion and have experience as

digital consumers. These students can support each other in developing businesses with digital marketing with the ability to create digital accounts, make creative and attractive promotional content, and organize groups so that the discussion will run effectively and reach the purpose.

Interactional communication is one of the communication models that emphasizes reciprocity or response. One of the reciprocities that emerged is the answer to questions about what kinds of problems took place when entrepreneurs were building their businesses.

Not all individuals in the discussion gave the same response, but those who gave minimum responses still got benefits by listening to the group's discussion. The communication process in the form of discussion can be utilized by other members with common problems and desires. Therefore the group can identify about ten issues that have arisen and are faced by young entrepreneurs. In the group discussion, this would benefit the passive individuals who still want to absorb the information. Each group member can feel that others also experience the problems they face. Therefore, the communication process could motivate group members to keep building business because the problems they are currently facing are normal things experienced by businessmen.

Thirdly, a difference scope of experience can build openness between members of the groups. During the discussion, everybody can talk about anything, especially things that have been a problem for their business. In building their SMEs during the pandemic, digital businesses have been among the most popularly chosen by many entrepreneurs. A number of problems addressed have become the beginning of the effort to discuss business development by the digital method.

The openness of the young generation of business owners in the group in interacting with a wider social environment and their willingness to open their minds are really helpful in getting the new meaning of digital business. The group also gets a new interpretation that enriches their knowledge about their business, even though it was not easy for each individual. Time and frequent discussion were required to build sustainable interactional communication.

AJ from SMEs group stated:

When I meet the student group for the first time, I feel not confident. But, I really want to have the knowledge about online business. In the next discussion, I felt more relaxed and paid more attention to other entrepreneurs' problems. I realize that we have to meet people from other groups or from different experiences for some additional knowledge.

The frequent interactional communication allowed each individual to discuss their field of experience. Group members consulted each other about the introduction of digital media format, discussed the making of applications and interesting digital content, and management of digital business in the long term. The student group field of experience also enriched more knowledge for the group of SMEs owner about how to determine how to sell the product attractively through pictures, unique captions, and the product description offered. Other than that, there is knowledge about how to make competitor analysis and the price tailored to the market target. Digital communication media have opened the eyes of young entrepreneurs so that they would get convenience in analyzing the weaknesses and strengths that the competitors have.

Fourth, the diverse field of experience of the group members has allowed collaboration. When the problems were found, the main issue during the pandemic was collaborating with another party. This would be tough if the entrepreneurs only stayed in the same environment and tended not to develop themselves. The process of learning how to use digital media was not doable since they only gathered with the same old community. The same community only provided them with the same old information and was not updated with current information. Contrary to that, the interactional process with the new group provided ample perspectives about the value added to the business field, or at least each group member would get a further information. Besides that, the interactional communication that took place several times and delivered directly in a form of discussion could give deeper understanding and invoked empathy towards the problems other group members face about the business they are doing.

RH from the student group concluded with the statement below:

The point that we get in the group discussion is that we have to realize that building the business needs some learning process. We have to open our minds to others and new issues and with one or some group with new experiences. Otherwise, we will be left behind and lack of some opportunity.

During the interactional communication process through the FGD, there was meaning exchange with the feedback that connected the receiver and sender of the message. *Feedback* is the communication given to the source of the message to show understanding.

Discussion

Referring to the previous study, it was noted that the motive of young entrepreneurs in online business was because conventional business was down while online business could reach more potential buyers from all over places. Young entrepreneurs perceive online business as based on mutual trust between business players (Kurniawan & Wibowo, 2015). That finding supported the result of this study, emphasizing that in the FGD process, the problems in developing SMEs done by the young generation group, one of the basic problems is reaching the potential buyers, problems regarding the availability of raw materials and product expedition.

During several meetings through FGD, there was a developing communication situation in the group with varied backgrounds. The interactional communication process that has been built allows each individual in the group to have control over their roles. During the discussion process, each member has accountability to remind each other. Every group member was involved in the idea contribution and felt that they were part of the group because the group member did not only communicate with their group but also interacted with the members of other groups.

The messages conveyed in the discussion were responses towards the messages of the sender and affected the next behavior of the sender. The debate about this research also referred to the study about teachers and students who have concluded interactional communication was measured through five indicators: First, response (a) verbal or non-verbal response, (b) confidence in expressing an opinion. Secondly, openness includes (a) the teacher's willingness to honestly comment on what students have expressed, (b) the teacher's willingness to acknowledge and accept the students' perspective. Thirdly, meaning exchange which includes (a) the teacher's willingness to listen to students' opposite opinions, (b) the teacher's willingness to change position if the situation suggests so. Fourthly, positive attitudes (a) positive attitudes towards students, (b) support the students positively. Fifthly, the moderate attitude in which there are (a) balance between teacher and student in speaking their minds, (b) balance between teacher in listening to the students (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2019).

In this research, the interactional communication process between group members with their social environment and with different member groups can provide a chance for the group to respond upon the problems found in the effort of business development. There were mutual opennesses between group members to comment on the things expressed by other members and acceptance of the thoughts communicated by each groups. Therefore, there was meaning exchange in the group because of the positive and supportive attitude in accepting the idea of business development through online marketing.

On further discussion, there was even more openness toward the possibility of building new networking, collaboration in solution seeking in building business with digital marketing method, especially in creating the platform and content management.

This research is also in line with the study of Banuanek and colleagues, which showed that conformity happens when there is a status difference inside the group. Meanwhile, the social facilitation took place when the group emerged as the study medium to motivate its member as capacity building. On the other side, there was no polarization found in the group of Pemuda Jemaat Pniel Sikumana because this group was perceived as braver, creative, and innovative in facing all the challenges in the group (Banunaek et al., 2021)

This study also found that the interactional communication process built by the young generation group showed conformity because there was a status difference in the group (SMEs entrepreneurs and university student group). Conformity was made by contributing to solutions in business development by using online marketing methods. Group also presented as a learning medium for all group members from the problem identification phase up to the solution in the form of digital platform and content implementation. Discussions that have evolved in several meetings have motivated every group member to build capacity as SME players and students in developing their knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Communication with the interactional model approach has allowed group members to acquire new meaning for every challenge and the chance to build digital business for SMEs. From the various social environment, the young generation in groups gets new knowledge and experience in building a business with digital marketing. Interactional and sustainable communication can build group cohesiveness; therefore, it is better to coordinate many challenges, changes, and drafting of new strategies in business development. All parties have been open to communicating their problems and opinions regarding business development by using digital marketing.

Through interactional communication in several time meetings, there have been an effort to harmonize and build comfortable communication. Therefore, each individual has the same opportunity to learn the most suitable two-way communication method. The choice of this communication model, later on, could create ease in building cooperation on the next step. The researcher recommends that the pandemic situation, which has now turned into endemic, had given a significant lesson for SME entrepreneurs. There will always be a possibility that Covid-19 or its other variants will emerge as new threats. Thus, the young generation requires agility to build their business and keep on adapting and collaborating. The interactional communication process with meaning and diverse field of experience elements could be best utilized to support the adaptation and collaboration process.

REFERENCES

- Amalia, A., & Sudiwijaya, E. (2020). Yogyakarta tourism promotion using user-generated-content feature. *Komunikator*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.18196/jkm.122042>
- Amalia, S., & Dewi, K. S. (2013). Hubungan antara komunikasi interaksional orangtua dan anak dengan efikasi diri dalam persiapan kerja pada siswa kelas xi di SMK Walisongo Semarang. *Jurnal Empati*, 2(3), 567–576. <https://doi.org/10.14710/EMPATI.2013.7379>
- Ambarwati, & Sobari, I. S. (2020). Membangun jiwa kewirausahaan di era milenial bagi mahasiswa Institut Stiami kampus Tangerang Selatan. *Jurnal Komunitas*, 2(2), 140–144. <https://doi.org/10.31334/JKS.V2I2.736>
- Amina, N. W. R. (2017). Interaksional model komunikasi pembangunan di era demassifikasi. *Bricolage*, 3(01), 13–17. <https://doi.org/10.30813/bricolage.v3i01.842>
- Anggito, A., & Setiawan, J. (2018). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Cet. I). Sukabumi, CV. Jejak.
- Avriyanti, S. (2021). Strategi bertahan bisnis di tengah pandemi Covid-19 dengan memanfaatkan bisnis digital (Studi pada UKM yang terdaftar pada Dinas Koperasi, Usaha Kecil dan Menengah Kabupaten Tabalong). *Jurnal PubBis*, 5(1), 60–74. <https://doi.org/10.35722/pubbis.v5i1.380>
- Azizah, F. N., Ilham, I. F., Aqidah, L. P., Firdaus, S. A., Astuti, S. A. D., & Buchori, I. (2020). Strategi UMKM untuk meningkatkan perekonomian selama pandemi Covid-19 pada saat New Normal. *Oeconomicus*, 5(1), 46–62. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15642/oje.2020.5.1.46-62>
- Banunaek, P. C., Aloysius, L., & Manafe, Y. D. (2021). Pengalaman komunikasi kelompok. *Jurnal Communio : Jurnal Jurusan Ilmu Komunikasi*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.35508/jikom.v10i2.3168>
- Dermawansyah, M., & Rizqi, R. M. (2021). Analisis strategi komunikasi pemasaran melalui digital marketing pada home industri kopi Cahaya Robusta Sumbawa. *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Bisnis*, 4(1), 46–51. <https://jurnal.uts.ac.id/index.php/jmb/article/view/1047>
- Fathkhurrahman, Suroto, B., & Hadiyati. (2018). Wirausaha muda terdidik: Masalah dan solusi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, 15(2), 102–109. <https://journal.unilak.ac.id/index.php/JIEB/article/view/1464/1188>
- Fauziya, D. S. (2013). *Pengembangan model pembelajaran pemrosesan informasi gaya program acara Suara Anda berbasis komunikasi interaksional dalam pembelajaran berbicara* [Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia]. <http://repository.upi.edu/1849/>
- Kurniawan, A. W., & Wibowo, A. M. (2015). Makna bisnis online bagi pengusaha muda. *Jurnal Komunikasi Hasil Pemikiran Dan Penelitian*, 1(2), 28–36. <https://journal.uniga.ac.id/index.php/JK/article/download/489/507>

- LPEM FEB UI, & UNDP. (2020). *Impact of pandemic on MSMEs in Indonesia*.
<https://www.lpem.org/id/report-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-msmes-in-indonesia/>
- Maharani, S. H., Rohayati, & Permanasari, L. (2022). Pemanfaatan digital marketing oleh pelaku UMKM di Indonesia di masa pandemi Covid-19. *Bima*, 1(1), 15–20.
<https://ejurnal.poliban.ac.id/index.php/JBM/article/view/1323/878>
- Maryati, W., & Masriani, I. (2019). Peluang bisnis di era digital bagi generasi muda dalam berwirausaha: Strategi menguatkan perekonomian. *Jurnal Mebis*, 4(2), 125–130.
<https://doi.org/10.33005/MEBIS.V4I2.62>
- Merieska, P., & Meiyanto, I. S. (2019). Passion berwirausaha pada pengusaha muda. *Gajah Mada Journal of Psychology (GamaJoP)*, 3(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.22146/GAMAJOP.42394>
- Rahmawati, R., & Suryadi, E. (2019). Kreativitas mengajar guru dan komunikasi interaksional sebagai determinan terhadap prestasi belajar siswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Manajemen Perkantoran*, 4(2), 190–199. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpm.v4i2.18014>
- Rosita, R. (2020). Pengaruh pandemi Covid-19 terhadap UMKM di Indonesia. *Jurnal Lentera Bisnis*, 9(2), 109–120. <https://doi.org/10.34127/jrlab.v9i2.380>
- Sarastuti, D. (2017). Strategi komunikasi pemasaran online produk busana muslim Queenova. *Visi Komunikasi*, 16(01), 71–90. <https://doi.org/dx.doi.org/10.22441/visikom.v16i1.1645>
- Sari, Y., & Utami, N. W. (2021). Komunikasi pemasaran digital sebagai tantangan teknologi digital marketing communication as a technology challenge. *Mahasiswa Komunikasi Cantrik*, 1, 1–14.
<https://doi.org/doi.org/10.20885/cantrik.voll.iss1.art1>
- Stacks, D. W. (2017). Public Relations Research. In *Public Relations Planning* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Statistik, B. P. (2021). Hasil sensus penduduk 2020. *Berita Resmi Statistik*, 1(7), 1–52.
<https://papua.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2018/05/07/336/indeks-pembangunan-manusia-provinsi-papua-tahun-2017.html>
- West, R., & Turner, L. (2018). Introducing communication theory: Analysis and application. In *McGraw-Hill Education*.
- Widyastuti, D. A. R., Pramudyanto, A. B., & Astuti, R. A. V. N. P. (2018). Dinamika dalam membangun merek kolektif pada Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah. *Komunikator*, 10(2).
<https://doi.org/10.18196/jkm.101013>
- Yusuf, A. M. (2017). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif & penelitian gabungan* (1st Ed.). Jakarta, Kencana.
- Zebua, D. D. N., & Sunaryanto, L. T. (2021). Platform digital sebagai alternatif bertahan di era pandemi Covid-19 bagi pelaku bisnis pertanian. *Mimbar Agribisnis*, 7(1), 848.
<https://doi.org/10.25157/ma.v7i1.4834>