

Utilization of Micro Influencers and Engagement in Social Media to Gain Cadet Candidates

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Abstract

Since COVID-19 hit the world, Shipping Colleges and schools around the world have experienced severe disruption. One of the challenges that arises is how to attract people back to register themselves as seafarers as a career choice in the future. To solve this problem, Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong conducts comprehensive activities by mobilizing public relations and utilizing social media platforms such as Instagram. This research is participatory with qualitative descriptive methods. The subjects used were 226 prospective cadets who were declared to have passed the selection for cadet candidates at the Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong throughout 2022. The results showed that the use of social media is very good to be implemented in the future with various things that must be maximized: 1) there needs to be continuous cooperation with influencers; 2) development in the presentation of content in accordance with the times; 3) investment in much more up-to-date equipment with competent resources to operate it. The use of social media in socializing the selection of prospective cadets has various advantages such as relatively cheap costs, but there are also various disadvantages including not reaching underdeveloped, frontier and outermost areas.

Keywords: Micro Influencers, Social Media, Candidates



1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the indispensable role of seafarers in facilitating the global trade of essential commodities, including medical supplies and food, while maintaining the integrity of supply chains through maritime transportation [1]. However, the financial strain induced by the pandemic has posed challenges for the families of prospective seafarers, who are typically tasked with funding their education [2]. To address this confluence of factors and sustain the supply and demand of maritime personnel, there is a pressing need to implement targeted strategies aimed at both garnering public interest and disseminating information regarding maritime education and training opportunities[3].

In the contemporary digital landscape, characterized by pervasive internet connectivity, communication paradigms have undergone significant transformations[4]. Ditch the instant pleasure industry & live a more pleasurable life [5], that the internet serves as a readily accessible medium for instant gratification, often associated with the neurochemical reward mechanisms of the human brain [6]. Against this backdrop, Instagram has emerged as a prominent social networking platform, initially conceived in 2010 with a primary focus on visual content, particularly photography [7]. However, Instagram has evolved beyond a mere photo-sharing platform, becoming a thriving marketplace where users engage in various forms of online commerce [8]. Notably, Instagram facilitates the promotion and sale of diverse products, including but not limited to footwear, groceries, accessories, gadgets, and apparel, reflecting its adaptability to the demands of the modern market [9]. Given its user-friendly interface and engaging features, Instagram has become an attractive platform for businesses seeking to establish an online presence and reach a broader audience [10].

Recognizing the potential of Instagram as a strategic communication channel, Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong has adopted proactive measures to enhance its outreach efforts [11]. In particular, the institution has forged collaborations with micro-influencers and leveraged social media platforms, notably Instagram Live, to engage with audiences effectively [12]. By harnessing the power of social media, Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong endeavors to foster meaningful interactions with prospective students and their families, thereby bolstering awareness and interest in maritime education and training programs.

2. Research Method

The research methodology employed in this study is primarily descriptive research, which aims to systematically describe phenomena or events within the field [13]. This approach is complemented by a comprehensive literature review to elucidate existing theories and their interrelations, providing the foundation for the investigation and formulation of new hypotheses to be empirically tested [14].

In addition to the literature review, this study incorporates qualitative data collection methods, including direct interviews with influential figures such as "Adhi Bassitoayya and Tummink Abu." These interviews serve to gauge the effectiveness of information dissemination over five days across various social media platforms, notably Instagram. Through the examination of influencers' impact on the spread of information regarding prospective student admissions at Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong, insights are gleaned into their role in shaping audience perceptions and behaviors. Concurrently, questionnaire data are gathered from a sample population of 226 prospective cadets at Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of the efficacy of social media engagement strategies in reaching and engaging the target audience.

2.1 Literature Review

The development of communication technology in conveying messages can also shape people's behavior, especially with the development of social media as a means of expressing feelings, daily activities and also experiences experienced by every human being [15]. From social media, that finally gave birth to a trend in the world of digital marketing, namely influencers [16]. Suggest that influencer is a term in a phenomenon that occurs in modern times where there

have been collaborations with large corporations in recent years [17]. The majority of influencers fall into categories such as celebrities, industry experts and thought leaders, bloggers or content creators on social media. Influencers who are active on social media (especially micro bloggers) have active engagement with their followers or followers [18].

Influencers on social media open up new channels for companies that own brands or individuals who want to interact directly with their customers [19]. Social media influencers are those who try to influence others to take a certain action, which is nothing but to buy, intrigue his audience, make understanding and direct his audience's behavior for something that he shows they think is good or even best [20]. E-WOM or electronic Word of Mouth is an informal communication aimed at customers via the internet to then show or express the use and / or characteristics of certain goods or services by utilizing various social media platforms so that customers will draw their own conclusions and will be easier to receive messages from the products or services offered [21]. Furthermore, The existence of eWOM will create a meaningful difference because the exchange of existing information will become easier and faster due to several things, including:

1. Communication media become widespread, both from one person to many people, one person to another and from many people to many others,
2. Maximizing the number of audiences to be positive but on the one hand eWOM can also cause the spread of negative information and will be more accessible globally,
3. Allows sharing between strangers to other strangers without going through friend or family filters,
4. Can spread on various social media,
5. Can be stored for a long time (historical traces).

Activities carried out by influencers on social media can also be referred to as a form of mass communication [22]. States that in principle mass communication is an exchange of information carried out by one or more to an audience that is one-way [23]. Influencers are divided into three categories based on the number of followers and their social status, including:

1. Mega Influencer or Celebrity; who carry the image of a brand or its fans through media with a huge reach (above one million followers) but low engagement [24].
2. Macro Influencer or opinion leader; consists of bloggers or journalists who have been close to their followers. They rely on the ability to convey an action that influences their followers on social media and has a significant influence on the behavior of potential customers of a trademark they promote on social media [25]. Sometimes they just write honest reviews of an item and recommendations from their opinions will help potential buyers buy goods or not buy a trademark [26].
3. Micro Influencer; Unlike celebrities and macro influencers who already have closeness to their followers, micro influencers rely on something that is considered different from others that they do and then show to their audience so that the influence will have a significant impact on audience perception and will even have an impact on the products or services they promote. They can trigger consumer behavior because they are given these products or goods and services and use them in everyday life [27].

One or more influencers can direct or advise and influence their audience to buy goods or use services they promote through the social media they use [28]. There are 3 factors that influencers must have, including:

1. Reach, the ability to reach an already targeted audience;
2. Relevance, the ability to strengthen connections to a particular brand of goods or services or opinions; and
3. Resonance, the ability to direct the behavior of the audience to something desired.

3. Findings

3.1 Social Media Engagement and Reach (Instagram Story)

Based on the findings of the literature review, micro influencers have been identified as effective representatives for maximizing the socialization of the selection process for prospective cadets at Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong. These micro influencers, prominent figures within the local Makassar City community, boast follower counts ranging from 73,000 to 700,000, placing them squarely within the micro influencer category. The experimental results obtained from Instagram social media analytics are presented in Table 1, showcasing the engagement and reach achieved by these micro influencers over a period of 5 days:

Table 1. Results of Engagement and Reach from Micro Influencers within 5 Days

No	Media	Total View (Reach)	Total Engagement
1.	Instagram Story, first day and second day	28,000	673
2.	Instagram Story, third day and fourth day	53,000	2,500
Total		81,000	3,173

These findings underscore the significant reach and engagement achieved through the utilization of micro influencers on Instagram, highlighting their effectiveness in promoting awareness and interaction regarding the cadet selection process.

3.2 Social Media Engagement and Reach (Instagram Live)

Based on the Instagram live activities conducted, the results reveal the reach and engagement achieved over a span of 5 days. Table 2 presents the detailed findings:

Table 2. Results of Engagement and Reach from Micro Influencers within 5 Days

No	Media	Total View (Reach)	Total Engagement
1	Instagram live 20 April 2022	722	238
2	Instagram live 25 April 2022	681	207
3	Instagram live 27 April 2022	759	70
4	Instagram live 6 July 2022	690	46
5	Instagram live 19 July 2022	2,663	263
6	Instagram live 20 July 2022	580	40
Total		6,095	864

These findings demonstrate the reach and engagement garnered through Instagram live sessions conducted by micro influencers. The data underscores the effectiveness of this approach in fostering interaction and disseminating information about the cadet selection process at Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong.

3.3 Questionnaire Result

To assess the effectiveness of the influencers, a total of 836 individuals participated in the study, of which 350 prospective cadets who successfully passed the selection process were eligible for distributing questionnaires. Among them, 226 respondents completed the questionnaires accurately. The results were juxtaposed with data gathered through direct outreach efforts in various regions across South Sulawesi and Eastern Indonesia, targeting prospective cadets from disadvantaged areas (3T) and Indigenous Papuans participating in the official bond program. The questionnaire findings are summarized as follows:

1. 200 individuals, constituting 88.9% of prospective cadets, acquired information regarding cadet acceptance through the social media platform "Instagram".

225 responses

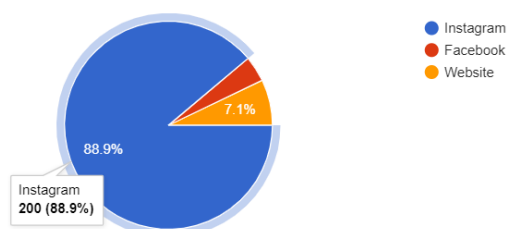


Figure 1. Pie Chart Depicting the Percentage and Number of Prospective Cadets Receiving Information from Various Social Media Platforms

- 96 prospective cadets, equivalent to 42 percent, obtained information about the selection process for cadet admission through social media.

226 responses

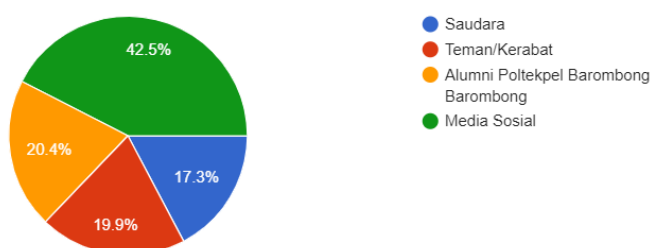


Figure 2. Pie Chart of the Percentage and Number of Prospective Cadets Who Get Selection Information for The Admission of Prospective Cadets

These findings underscore the significant role of social media, particularly Instagram, in disseminating information about the cadet selection process, with a substantial majority of prospective cadets obtaining crucial updates through this platform.

4. Conclusion

The integration of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, along with strategic partnerships with micro-influencers, has proven to be a highly efficacious strategy for disseminating information and fostering engagement regarding the recruitment of prospective cadets at Marine Science Polytechnic of Barombong. The study's findings underscore the substantial reach and interaction achieved over a brief period, highlighting the platform's capacity to captivate audience interest and support recruitment endeavors effectively. However, while digital initiatives hold considerable promise for outreach, addressing challenges related to inclusivity and accessibility, particularly in underserved regions, remains imperative. Looking ahead, sustained investment in influencer collaborations, content optimization, and initiatives aimed at bridging the digital gap will be essential for maximizing recruitment outcomes and cultivating a diverse talent pool of proficient seafarers for the maritime sector. The involvement of two influencers within a five-day period significantly heightened brand awareness, reaching 81,000 accounts with an average interaction rate of 3,170 accounts. This underscores the notable effectiveness of influencer partnerships, as evidenced by the questionnaire responses, where 200 prospective cadets acknowledged obtaining information about the cadet selection process through Instagram.

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