

## OPTIMIZING INSTAGRAM PROMOTION: A NETNOGRAPHIC STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCERS AND PAID PROMOTIONS IN THE SCREEN-PRINTING BUSINESS



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### Abstract

The objective of this research is to describe the use of Instagram social media, the challenges in using influencer services and paid promotions as promotional media through Instagram, and the positive and negative impacts of using influencer services and paid promotions for promotional purposes through Instagram in the screen-printing business of Merv Industries. The type of research employed is qualitative research with a netnographic study design. Data validity is ensured through qualitative triangulation of sources and methods. The data collection techniques used include interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis techniques include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion and verification. The research findings indicate that Instagram has been established as one of the primary social media promotion platforms because it is a relatively easy step to introduce a brand using influencer services and paid promotions. The findings suggest that these promotional strategies have a significant positive impact on the business, helping to introduce its products to a broader network through promotional media, especially Instagram. The initial idea for choosing to use influencer services and paid promotions as a promotional medium involves selecting trending influencers, as they provide a good impact on the business, while paid promotions are primarily used to introduce the business. The positive impacts include an increase in followers, profile visits on Instagram, and gaining profits and popularity. The negative impact noted is the occurrence of negative comments. The proposed solution is to better select influencers and paid promotions that provide good feedback to increase sales, not just to introduce the brand. Future research could focus on the obstacles in selecting influencer services and paid promotions.

**Keywords:** Netnographic Study, Influencer, Paid Promotion, Instagram Promotion

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, the advancement of information technology is experiencing rapid progress, including the use of social media by the Indonesian population (Kristi & Tumpal, 2023). Developments in technology within the business world compel companies and entrepreneurs to seek innovations regarding their business strategies, especially in marketing strategies (Nasih, Susanto, Fanshury & Hermawan, 2020). The rapid progress of technology, the digital world, and the internet have impacted the marketing realm. Marketing trends have shifted from conventional (offline) methods to digital (online) methods (Sulaksono & Zakaria, 2020). About ten years ago, many promotions were conducted using product advertisements on television (offline marketing), whereas now there has been a shift towards online advertising on social media, known as digital marketing (Isbahi et al, 2022).

According to Sulaksono & Zakaria (2020), digital marketing is promotional and market-seeking activities conducted through online digital media using various social networks. Digital marketing can reach everyone, anywhere, without geographical or time limitations. There are several types of digital marketing, one of which is social media marketing. Social media marketing is a type of digital marketing used for various purposes, such as a means of communication, and a means of seeking information, and increasingly, entrepreneurs and businesspeople are optimizing it to promote products/services through various social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and others (Fathorrahman & Nufus, 2021).

Social media is part of the latest technological developments, stemming from new web technologies based on the internet, which facilitate communication, sharing, participation, and the creation of online networks, enabling the dissemination of content (Rahmadani, 2021). According to the agency We Are Social, social media in Indonesia has now become a major platform for e-commerce in terms of product marketing, one of which is Instagram. Instagram was the third most active social media platform in Indonesia in 2021, with 86.6% of the population using it, following YouTube and WhatsApp, with a total usage duration of 17 hours per month (Stephanie, 2021).

The role of social media in the daily lives of Indonesians, particularly Instagram, shows very high intensity (Rahmah, 2024). The high number of Instagram users has led many people to try to utilize it as a tool to support business promotion, making it one of the primary business marketing activities (Rahmadani, 2021). On the Instagram social media platform, many terms are frequently used by its users, such as selebgram, paid promote, endorse, and influencer.

According to Digital Marketing Agency (2020), the term "paid promote" comes from the word "paid," meaning to pay, and the word "promote" means promotion. Therefore, paid promotion can be interpreted as a paid promotional service. Providers of paid promotion services are usually Instagram accounts with a large number of followers. On the other hand, the term "influencer" comes from the English word "influence," which means to affect. Thus, an influencer refers to someone who has the ability to make a positive impact on the public. Typically, influencers have their power to influence many people.

The use of influencer services, whether celebrities or non-celebrities, and the use of paid promote services are currently widespread because they represent a form of mutually beneficial cooperation between both parties (Nasih, Susanto, Fanshury & Hermawan, 2020), such as for celebrities and entrepreneurs. Companies or entrepreneurs are willing to spend a lot of money to implement sales and marketing strategies. The use of influencer and paid promote services can indirectly influence their followers on Instagram and promote the product brands they endorse, enticing their followers to make purchases.

One entrepreneur who uses influencer and paid promote services for promotion on Instagram is Merv Industries. Merv Industries is a Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) engaged in screen printing and has a sewing division located in Kepuh Village, Nguter District, Sukoharjo Regency. Merv Industries produces T-shirts, hoodies, jackets, polo shirts, PDH/PDL uniforms, tote bags, and jerseys, and can create custom screen-printing designs according to customer requests.

Merv Industries has used influencer services as a promotional medium, although these influencers are still local; they already have many followers on Instagram. For paid promote services, they consider the number of followers and promote through local

Instagram accounts and paid promote accounts that are endorsed by students who already have many followers on Instagram. Merv Industries uses influencers and paid promotion services to influence the purchase interest of followers and increase potential customers. Additionally, they aim to increase the number of followers on Merv Industries' own Instagram account.

This study aims to describe the use of the Instagram social media platform in Merv Industries, a screen-printing convection business, as a promotional tool, to delineate the obstacles encountered in utilizing influencer services and paid promotions as promotional tools via Instagram social media platform, and to outline the positive and negative impacts of employing influencer services and paid promotions as promotional tools through the Instagram social media platform.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Social Media Marketing**

Social media marketing is a type of digital marketing used for various purposes, such as communication, and information seeking, and increasingly, many entrepreneurs or business people are optimizing it to promote products/services through the use of various social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and others (Fathorrahman & Nufus, 2021). Additionally, according to Alhadid & H. Abu-Rahman (2014), social media marketing is one of the marketing strategies used by business owners to become part of a network with people through the internet or online. Marketing techniques in social media marketing should be carried out by website owners and online businesses because social media marketing techniques are easier, cheaper, and more efficient (Untari & Fajariana, 2018).

### **Instagram**

According to Listiyaningsih & Sutarso (2023), Instagram (IG or Insta) is an application that facilitates photo and video sharing. Instagram has become one of the social media platforms focused on the business world. The features available on Instagram provide

opportunities for buying and selling activities. Therefore, Instagram can serve as a marketing communication medium. Meanwhile, according to Diem & Yulianti (2019), Instagram is a communication medium that can be used as a marketing platform for products/services to be offered by utilizing several Instagram features that benefit entrepreneurs. Instagram, as a free medium for marketing or promotion, can provide significant benefits when leveraging various features and endorser services.

### **Influencer**

According to Risanti & Dherby (2021), an influencer is someone who can impact the purchasing decisions of their target audience through their expertise, status, credibility, reputation, or relationship with their audience. Through photo and video posts, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and interactions with their audience on social media, influencers can have a significant impact on their followers. Furthermore, according to Evelina & Handayani (2018), an influencer is someone who can influence, and change opinions, and behaviors online on social media. Their opinions have a significant impact on the reputation of a product or brand.

### **Paid Promote**

According to Lestari & Aldianto (2016) paid promotion is a promotional tool where the company asks an administrator of a community who has many followers on their Instagram account to promote the company's product. In return, the company will pay the cost to the account owner. Furthermore, according to Rahmadani (2021), paid promotion is a promotional activity carried out by an online shop by paying for promotional services on social media accounts. Additionally, paid promotion is a service used to promote a product or service on social media. Utilizing this service can help online shops promote the products or services they sell (Arifah & Mustikarini, 2016).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative research type with a netnographic study design. A netnographic study is a research method to reveal and analyze self-presentation used by

people digitally in online interactions (Kozinets, 2010). This research method is designed with a qualitative approach that combines the internet and ethnography. Unlike ethnography, which is based on observation, netnographic studies are in the online realm (Nasih, Susanto, Fanshury & Hermawan, 2020). The reason for using the netnographic study design is that this research will investigate in depth the use of Instagram as a promotional medium, the challenges, the positive impacts, and the negative impacts of using influencers and paid promotions as promotional media through Instagram for screen printing business Merv Industries. Data collection in this research was conducted through interviews, observation, and documentation. The validity of the data in this research was ensured using source triangulation and method triangulation (Bachri, 2010). Source triangulation was performed to obtain data from different sources but using the same technique, which was through interviews with respondents. Meanwhile, method triangulation in this research involved data collection through interviews and documentation. The technical analysis of the data in this research included data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification (Harsono, 2019). This research was conducted at the screen-printing business "Merv Industries" located in Kepuh Village, Nguter District, Sukoharjo Regency. The reason for selecting "Merv Industries" as the research site is due to its use of influencers and paid promotions as promotional media through Instagram. The subjects of this research include the business owner, employees, influencers, users of paid promotion services, and consumers.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Use of Instagram as Promotional Media**

Based on the current advancements, Merv Industries has determined a strategy to promote its products using social media as the promotional medium. This can be summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
**Strategy Determination**

	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Employee 1</b>	<b>Employee 2</b>	<b>Influencer 1</b>	<b>Influencer 2</b>
Social media as a promotional media	Determining the social media platforms commonly used by young audiences.	Promoting through Instagram utilizing paid promotion and endorsements to influencers.	Social media platforms currently widely used such as Instagram, aided by engaging influencers and paid promotion.		
Promoting through the Instagram social media platform.				Promoting through Instagram by offering a product to attract the audience.	Introducing a product to the audience with the hope that they recognize and even become interested in the offered product.

Merv Industries has determined a strategy to promote its products, which is through using Instagram. Currently, Instagram is one of the most accessed social media platforms by the younger audience. This is one of the factors that determine Instagram as a promotional media in social media because it's a relatively easy step to introduce a brand by utilizing influencer and paid promotion services.

The results of this study are in line with the research conducted by (Diem & Yulianti, 2019), (Handika & Dharma, 2018), and (Rejeki, Noviati & Qadariah 2020) which utilize Instagram as their online marketing communication media, utilizing various features available on Instagram to attract consumers to a particular brand or product within it and helps introduce products/services to Instagram users. According to (Hermoyo, Zailani & Widodo 2023), the utilization of Instagram as a social media platform has a positive and significant impact as a promotional tool for Merv Industries products.

In conducting promotion through social media, Merv Industries will inevitably yield results for itself. Aspects related to the outcomes obtained from promotional media can be summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

**Results Obtained from Promotional Media**

<b>Results Obtained from Promotional Media</b>	
<b>Owner</b>	Increasing awareness of its products.
<b>Employee 1</b>	Increase in followers on the Instagram account.
<b>Employee 2</b>	Introducing Merv Industries' products and increasing followers.
<b>Influencer 1</b>	The promoted products are known by the audience and can boost sales of a product.
<b>Influencer 2</b>	Gaining profits in the form of money.

The results obtained from the promotional media show a fairly positive impact on the business in introducing its products to a broader network through promotional media, especially Instagram.

This research is consistent with the study conducted by Sari, Agustina Kartika; and Susilo, (2019) which showed a significant increase in sales when using social media platform Instagram for promotional branding. Furthermore, the research conducted by (Pradana & Mardalis, 2023) shows that paid promotion has a positive impact on purchase intention.

**Challenges in Using Influencer Services and Paid Promotions as Promotional Media Through Instagram**

Based on the advancing technology, Merv Industries conducts promotional activities through social media using influencer and paid promotion services. Aspects related to the initial idea of using influencer and paid promotion services, as well as the appropriate method for selecting influencers and paid promotions as promotional media, can be summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

**Initial Ideas and Methods for Selecting Influencers and Paid Promotions**

	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Employee 1</b>	<b>Employee 2</b>
Initial ideas for utilizing influencer and paid promotion services	Introducing the brand and products of Merv Industries.	Many people use social media, especially Instagram.	Introducing the Merv Industries brand.
How to choose influencers and paid promote	Choosing trending influencers, while opting for paid promotions with a high number of followers.	Selecting local influencers who are currently trending, while choosing accounts from the local area with a large number of followers for paid promotions.	Choosing influencers who are currently going viral, while opting for paid promotions with accounts that have a large following.

The initial idea for selecting and determining the use of influencer and paid promotion services as promotional media is to choose influencers who are currently trending or viral, as this can have a positive impact on the business. One of the benefits is that it can increase followers and visits to the Instagram profile. Meanwhile, paid promotion services are primarily used to introduce the business; however, the feedback may not be as positive as with influencer services.

The findings of this study align with research conducted by (Evelina & Handayani, 2018) and (Utami & Wahyudi, 2024) which indicates that influencers can quickly disseminate promotional messages about a product on Instagram, possess high credibility, and can foster trust in the promoted product. Influencers can increase consumer interest and trust, expand market reach, and boost sales volume by creating unique and engaging content and utilizing hashtags and Instagram Insights.

Utilizing influencer and paid promotion services incurs costs. Additionally, there are also advantages and disadvantages of using influencer and paid promotion services. Based on interview results, aspects related to the cost of using influencer and paid promotion services, the advantages and disadvantages of using influencer and paid promotion services, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of being an influencer, can be summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4.**  
**Costs, Advantages, and Disadvantages**

	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Owner	The cost of an influencer is 500,000, but if you create the content yourself, the cost is 300,000, while the cost of paid promotion is 100,000.	The advantage of using a viral influencer is that it can increase followers and visits to the Instagram account, while the advantage of paid promotion is that it's cheaper and Merv becomes more recognized.	The disadvantage of using an influencer is that it's expensive, and requires a large budget, while the disadvantage of paid promotion is different from that of influencers.
Employee 1	The cost issue is not clear.	The advantage is that the advertising process is easier.	The disadvantage is that the posting time is relatively short.
Employee 2	The cost for influencers is around 300,000-500,000, while paid promotion may cost around 100,000.	The advantage is that it increases followers.	The disadvantage is that it's expensive and requires time to post short videos.
Influencer 1	The cost of influencers varies.	The advantage depends on the influencer.	The disadvantage depends on the influencer.
Influencer 2	The cost of paying influencers varies according to the number of followers and insights.	The advantage is that if the right product is promoted to an influencer, the product can be marketed more quickly.	The disadvantage is that if an inappropriate product is promoted to an influencer, the product may be marketed slowly.

The costs associated with using influencer services are higher than those for paid promotions. However, the feedback from influencer marketing has a significantly better impact compared to paid promotions.

This research is consistent with the study conducted by Nasih, Susanto, Fanshury & Hermawan (2020) reveals that using influencer services increased the number of followers, sales, and engagement in each company's posts. The cost to hire an influencer ranges from

300,000 to 500,000, depending on the number of followers they have. (Arifah & Mustikarini, 2016) states that paid promotions can be used as a promotional medium and can increase potential consumers by helping to boost sales, although the increase in followers is not significant.

### **Positive Impact and Negative Impact of Using Influencer and Paid Promotion Services as Promotional Media Through Instagram Social Media Platform**

Every action has positive and negative impacts. This is the same for Merv Industries, which uses influencer and paid promotion services as promotional media. Based on interview results, aspects related to the positive and negative impacts of using influencer and paid promotion services, as well as the positive and negative impacts of being an influencer, can be summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5.**  
**Positive Impact and Negative Impact**

	<b>Positive Impact</b>	<b>Negative Impact</b>
Owner	Increase in followers, Instagram visits continue to grow.	There are no negative impacts and no significant effects.
Employee 1	It has an impact on social media.	There are no negative impacts
Employee 2	Visits to Merv's Instagram feed increase and followers grow.	There are no negative impacts
Influencer 1	Becoming more recognized and more products are offered to the influencer.	Bullying or unpleasant comments.
Influencer 2	Influencing people to follow what an influencer does, gaining profits, and increasing popularity.	Some haters can disturb you mentally.

The positive impacts for Merv Industries include increasing followers and Instagram profile visits, while influencers gain profit and popularity. However, paid promotions have an insignificant impact. The negative impact for Merv Industries is not significant, but influencers may face bullying and negative comments that can affect their mental health.

The results of this research are consistent with the studies conducted by (Handika & Dharma, 2018) and Nasih, Susanto, Fanshury & Hermawan (2020) which found that

influencers can influence the intention to purchase products as well as significantly increase followers and sales.

### **Customer Feedback on Merv Industries After Using Influencer and Paid Promotion Services**

After Merv Industries used influencer and paid promotion services as promotional media through Instagram, there must be feedback from consumers regarding Merv Industries. Based on interview results, aspects related to customer feedback on Merv Industries after using influencer and paid promotion services can be summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6.**  
**Customer Feedback**

<b>Customer Feedback</b>	
Owner	Merv Industries has become more widely known among many people.
Employee 1	Merv Industries has become more widely known among many people.
Employee 2	Merv Industries has become more widely known among many people.
Customer 1	The products produced are good and of high quality.
Customer 2	The products produced are good, of high quality, and affordably priced.

Customer feedback for Merv Industries indicates that Merv Industries has become known to many people because the products are good, of high quality, and affordably priced.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that Instagram has been established as one of the social media platforms for promotion. The initial idea used by Merv Industries to determine the use of influencer and paid promotion services is by selecting influencers who are currently viral, as they will have a positive impact on the business. In contrast, paid promotion services are only used to introduce the business, but the feedback is not as good. The cost incurred for using influencer services is higher than that for paid

promotion. Furthermore, the positive impact for Merv Industries is the increase in followers and visits to the Instagram profile, while for influencers, it is gaining profits and popularity. There is no significant negative impact on Merv Industries, but for influencers, there is bullying and negative comments that can disrupt mental health. Customer feedback for Merv Industries indicates that Merv Industries has become known to many people because the products are good and affordably priced.

This research implies that if direct promotion does not have a significant impact, social media promotion through Instagram can be used as a marketing medium in the digital era and self-promotion is considered less effective for the company, then using influencer and paid promotion services can increase sales and followers on social media. The limitations of this research include difficulties in communicating with paid promotion services, influencers being hard to contact, and the research location being quite far. Recommendations for future research include focusing on the challenges in selecting influencer and paid promotion services.

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