ABSTRACT

The increasing number of social media users has presented new media as a new platform for public relations practitioners to promote their brands. In order to maximize its function as a communication platform, companies utilize social media as a tool to promote their products or services. The present study aims to analyze the role of social media in building brand image and maintaining corporate image. The present study uses several concepts such as the Social Media network, MPR, Cyber PR, Brand Image, and Corporate Image to analyze its data. The research objects are social media of TPA (Third Party Assistance) Companies such as AAI Indonesia, Fullerton, Admedika and Owlexa. The present study uses post a positivist paradigm by applying a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze its data. The result of present study show that social media cannot be considered as an instrumental tool for building brand’s image. In addition, it has no vital for maintaining the corporate image.

Keywords: Social Media Network, MPR, Cyber PR, Brand Image and Corporate Image.
INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, one of latest advancements is communication tools that make it easier for humans to communicate or receive the latest news. Technological advances develop rapidly and help humans to interact with each other without being limited by distance and time. The convenience provided by the technology covers many things and penetrates various aspects of life, from business to education. This technology advancement is developed to meet the needs and desires of humans so that they can easily communicate with each other. The level of need for communication technology services is also growing in accordance with the increasingly dynamic level of human mobilization.

One of the most crucial developments of technology that really helps the flow of communication is the internet. Public can receive information and knowledge from various parties in a short time through the internet. As a result of the convenience that the internet can provide to its users, the internet is increasingly needed by the public. This indicates that the internet is no longer something new but something that is needed by the community in an effort to meet the need for information without any distance and time limits. This advancement in technology promote the birth of various websites on the Internet. The internet no longer contains search engines such as Google, Yahoo, etc., but also websites and various social networking sites. Through social networking sites, communication carried out through online media no longer runs in the same direction (from sender to receiver) but develops in two directions (sender-receiver-sender) and even multi-way (receiver-receiver). Lately, social networking sites keep growing and their users are increasing. It provides new chances for public relations to use social media as a platform to perform their jobs, giving information to public and promote their brands. It is also known as Cyber PR or public relation’ activities that use internet-based communication tools as its medium. Cyber PR has its advantages such as it has no time limit, accessible to anyone, inexpensive, interactive, and easily updated.

Building and maintaining brand loyalty and trust are the important themes for every firm in such a competitive environment. It is why companies use TPA or Third Party
Assistance. TPAs can be used to gain brand’s loyalty and trust from their customers. In addition, they help brands to survive in the online environment. Social media has influenced many aspects of consumer behavior in the 21st century, including awareness, information acquisition and sharing, opinions, attitudes, purchases, and post-purchase behavior. Due to social media, companies can now communicate with their customers and get feedback from them. In addition, customers can communicate with other customers and share the information about products and services (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Ghansah et al, 2016). In today’s competitive world, the web pages and social media offer an effective, unconventional method for companies in various industries to communicate and manage with consumers, the basis for building strong customer relationships. For example, the accommodation industry has been one of the fastest growing industries using the website communication with their consumers (Ip & Law, 2011; Hemsley & Dann, 2015).

Rapid changes in the digital world and sources of information available through computer networks and the internet, have caused changes in traditional marketing and consumer perceptions (Sweeney, 2005). In traditional marketing, companies communicate with consumers through advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations using print and electronic media referred here as a traditional media (Widyaningrum, 2016, p. 231). Creeber & Martin (2009) define new media or online media as a product of communication mediated technology that is shared with digital computers. Meanwhile, Lievrouw (2011) regards online media as one which consists of a combination of various elements or a media convergence.

However, Kotler & Keller (2009) remark that there are 4 (four) criteria to be crossed before media can be used effectively and efficiently for business organizations. Those criteria are measurable (market segment proficiency level can be measured, both magnitude and breadth and purchasing of this market segment), affordable (the market segment can be achieved so that it can be served effectively), substantial (it can be profitable when it is served) and actionable (all programs that have been arranged to
attract and serve this market segment can be effective).

Related to the above criteria, it is still debatable that social media can be used to market the products or service of a business organization. Although several researchers have investigated the use of social media to promote a brand (Singh, Veron, Jackson, & Cullinane, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kaplan & Haenheim-A, 2010), it seems important to investigate the use of social media to support the marketing of business. Thus, the present study aims to analyze the role of social media in supporting the marketing of products or service.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Marketing is a social and managerial process in which a person or organization acquires what they need and want through creation and exchange of value with others, Kotler & Amstrong (2008, p.6). Thus, it can be concluded that marketing is an activity carried out by individuals or organizations that includes the process of planning, pricing, promotion, and distribution of an idea, goods or services to create a satisfactory exchange. Harrison (2008, p. 416) defines marketing as a process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, services, organization and events to create exchanges that satisfied individual and organizational objectives.

MARKETING PUBLIC RELATION

Kotler & Keller (2008, p.276-277) state that companies do not only have to deal constructively with customers, suppliers and distributors. In addition, they have to deal with a large number of interested people. Society (public) is any group that has an interest in or influence on the ability of a company to achieve its current or future goals. Public relations include a variety of programs designed to promote or protect the image of the company or its respective products. Public relations is an organization's reputation management. Public relations identify with the perceptions held by the organization and provide information regarding the organization's performance to all relevant audiences (Oliver, 2007, p.4). Public relations concerns in developing a proper reputation for an organization, which is based on performance. This reputation does
not only have to be good, but also what this organization deserves.

Ideally, PR and marketing need to have separate departments (divisions). Nevertheless, those departments are united to achieve company goals despite having different objectives. Public relations aims to build an image (to the target public) while marketing aims to sell products (product selling) to the target market. The combination of these two important organizational elements gave birth to the concept of "Marketing Public Relations" (MPR), Kriyantono (2008, p.57). Ardianto (2009, p.120-121) states that public relations started to enter marketing field due to the increasing needs and interests of consumers, competitive prices, need to expand distribution, and the number of promotions of similar products/services. Thus, marketing public relations is defined as a process of planning, executing, and evaluating programs that encourage consumer purchase and satisfaction through credible communication in conveying information and creating impressions that identify the company and its products with the needs, wants, concerns and interests of consumers.

**CYBER PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Cyber Public Relations is commonly seen as a form of operating cyberspace in practice public relations work (Doherty in Aprinta, 2014). Onggo (2004) states that, cyber PR is a public relations initiative which uses the internet as a medium for publicity. Having similar objectives with public relations, cyber PR also creates or forms the image of a company. Aprinta (2014) says those strategies are online publication, social media and online community. In addition, Onggo (2004, p. 8) remarks that cyber public relations activities can produce what is called the 3Rs for organizations/companies. Following are those activities:

1. Relations (an ability able to interact with various target audiences in order to build relationships and corporate image).

2. Reputation (the most important asset in business. E-PR is the art of building an online reputation on an ongoing basis)

3. Relevance (online PR’s initiatives to be relevant to corporate’s public targets).
As part of the digital world, public relations practitioners must improve their ability to communicate online. Holtz (2002, p. 127) mentions four characteristics of cyber public relations:

1. **Strategic** (public relations’ activities that focus on influencing the company's business results).
2. **Integrated** (public relations activities that focus on the use of the internet as an element in the preparation of a broader communication program).
3. **Targeted** (public relations’ activities that focus on the use of the internet more than any other medium of communication in order to achieve its public targets. The use of the internet is based on the consideration that the internet has advantages over other media).
4. **Measurable** (the effectiveness of the public relations activities’ planning must be measured. The assessment indicators are not only things that can be seen such as feedback, but also the impact of public relations activities).

**SOCIAL NETWORK MEDIA**

Social media is a medium on the internet that allows users to represent himself or interact, cooperate, share, communicate with other users, and form virtual social bonds. Social media is a digital one where social reality occurs and the space-time of its user interaction. The values that exist in society and the community can also emerge in the same or different form on the internet (Nasrullah, 2016). Social media is one of the communication channels that can reach people who are internet literate, but the ease of interaction and the speed of information dissemination cause public opinion to target all levels of society. Social media-based reputation management can be a double-edged knife in the management of public opinion. The more positive the opinion formed, the better the image and reputation of the government organization. Conversely, the more negative public opinion the worse the image and reputation of the government (Liu et al, 2017, p. 4). Social Network Theory is a study on how people, organizations or groups interact with others inside their network. Understanding the theory is easier when you examine the individual pieces starting with
the largest element, such as networks and the actor, the smallest element.

**BRAND**

According to Ketler & Keller (2006, p. 256), a brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate”. On the other hand, Wheeler (2006, p.4) refers a brand as the promise, the big idea, and the expectations that reside in each customer's mind about a product, service, or company. People fall in love with brands, trust them, develop strong loyalties to them, buy them, and believe in their superiority. The brand is shorthand. It stands for something. A brand is the intangible sum of the attributes of a product or service: its name, packaging, price, history, reputation and the way it is marketed. A brand can be perceived as clusters of functional and emotional values that enable a unique promise to be made about an experience. The brand is conveyed by consumers' experience with it and by those consumers' perceptions of other people that use the same product or service. A brand delivers a point of difference from other comparable products. The reason consumers lean towards a particular brand is because they trust it. If the trust starts to break down, the brand weakens. A corporate brand needs to be an accurate reflection of what the organization is, how it performs, how it is different or unique among competitors and what image or identity is being projected (Harrison, 2008, p. 424).

**BRAND IMAGE**

Image is defined as the impression, feeling, and self-image of the public towards company; a deliberately created impression of an object, person or organization (Aprinta, 2014). Rajagukguk & Kasimiruddin (2015) state that image the company represents the public's perception of the company in question service, product or service quality, company culture, company behavior, or the behavior of individuals in the company and others. According to Soemirat & Ardianto (2011), images are formed based on knowledge and information received by a person. In accordance with Harrison's statement in Prihastiti (2012), complete information about company image includes
four elements such as (1) personality; (2) reputation; (3) value ethics; and (4) corporate identity.

Brand image is the current view of the customers about a brand. It can be defined as a unique bundle of associations within the minds of target customers. It signifies what the brand presently stands for. It is a set of beliefs held about a specific brand. In short, it is nothing but the consumers’ perception about the product. It is the manner in which a specific brand is positioned in the market. Brand image conveys emotional value and not just a mental image. Brand image is nothing but an organization’s character. It is an accumulation of contact and observation by people external to an organization. It should highlight an organization’s mission and vision to all. The main elements of positive brand image are- unique logo reflecting organization’s image, slogan describing organization’s business in brief and brand identifier supporting the key values. Brand image is the overall impression in consumers’ mind that is formed from all sources. Consumers develop various associations with the brand. Based on these associations, they form brand image. An image is formed about the brand on the basis of subjective perceptions of associations bundle that the consumers have about the brand. The idea behind brand image is that the consumer is not purchasing just the product/service but also the image associated with that product/service.

Brand images should be positive, unique and instant. Brand images can be strengthened using brand communications like advertising, packaging, word of mouth publicity, other promotional tools, etc. Brand image develops and conveys the product’s character in a unique manner different from its competitor’s image. The brand image consists of various associations in consumers’ mind - attributes, benefits and attributes. Brand attributes are the functional and mental connections with the brand that the customers have. They can be specific or conceptual. Benefits are the rationale for the purchase decision. There are three types of benefits: Functional benefits - what do you do better (than others), emotional benefits - how do you make me feel better (than others), and rational benefits/support - why do I believe you (more than others). Brand attributes are consumers overall assessment of a brand.
Brand image is not created, but is automatically formed. The brand image includes products' appeal, ease of use, functionality, fame, and overall value. Brand image is actually brand content. When the consumers purchase the product, they are also purchasing its image. Brand image is the objective and mental feedback of the consumers when they purchase a product. Positive brand image exceeds the customer expectations and enhances the goodwill and brand’s value of an organization.

**METHODOLOGY**

The present study uses a qualitative descriptive approach because the researcher aims to analyze communication activities of Cyber PR of several brands such as AAI Indonesia, Admedika, Fullerton and Owlexa websites in Instagram. Following are the units of analysis that will be investigated in present study:

1. Marketing communications staff who are responsible for social media management.
2. Instagram admin
3. Clients of TPA company.

Research instrument of present study is a semi-structured interview. Thus, the researcher will interview the admins of Instagram accounts of AAI Indonesia, Admedika, Fullerton and Owlexa websites. Data obtained through interviews will be coded and analyzed based on certain criteria.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of present study suggest that the admins of Instagram accounts of AAI Indonesia, Admedika, Fullerton and Owlexa websites provide information of their companies. Instagram was chosen because it is a popular social networking site. As admins, their jobs are communicators who inform their potential customers. Those admins provide information about the current products and services of their companies as well as updates of companies’ policies or upcoming products and services. Nevertheless, the admins did not create two-way communications with the companies’ customers or users despite receiving customers or users’ complains. In this sense, Instagram accounts of those companies have not achieved the goals of TPA companies.
However, the Instagram accounts of AAI Indonesia, Admedika, Fullerton and Owlexa websites have crossed the boxes as TPA assistance as they provide information about upcoming or recent promos, information and testimonies of users or customers. Such promotional information helps creating an image of reliable company. Their focuses are providing as much information as possible in the forms of Instagram status, photos, and design page. On the other hand, the feature of private message in Instagram is used as a follow-up platform for respective departments.

As those companies use social media, the message factor will be the main factor in the implementation of every communication activity. Management of this message must be able to accommodate the needs of companies as communicators and also the needs of the community, in this case followers, as communicants and also their consumers. This message factor is then translated into social media features such as status, photos and page views. If the management of this message is only focused on accommodating the desires of the company, it will only create an artificial two-way communication without an ability to accommodate the complains. Therefore, it seems important for AAI Indonesia, Fullerton, Admedika, and Owlexa as Third-Party Assistance companies to realize their positioning among their consumers or users, and realize what consumers really need from products and services. The information they get from their fans and followers seems suitable an evaluation material to improve their performance. If they accommodate their customers’ complains, it may improve their corporate image.

CONCLUSION

The age of internet has inspired various parties to use this media as a medium of communication in the public relations function that is carried out. This is also done by the TPA industry which uses internet media to provide information and product knowledge to its followers. The phenomenon of social media has also been put to good use by TPA. TPA chose Instagram because it has many advantages and is becoming a trend now. Information provided in this social media is information about the latest promos, activities involving their companies,
advertising materials, and partnerships that are maintained with others. All activities of providing information are carried out through features such as status, photos, and also the design page. The marketing of TPA also revealed that the use of social media did not have much effect on his perception of their brand, because according to him, the most important role was the quality of the service they owned, as long as the quality of service was not improved. Then, the perception of the company’s brand image will not change. Thus, TPAs should provide interactive communication when they use social media tools. First, TPA websites should be designed with a 24/7 online chat or at least guarantee that the questions and queries will be responded in one hour. Social media such as Instagram is one of the best ways to interact with customers so they should especially be used effectively to get into interaction. Secondly, customer interactions should be provided. Previous customer reviews and customer prepared creative materials such as videos should be accessible to those interested. The TPA should also take a precaution against negative comments and respond back on a real time basis to customer comments and resolve problems to better ensure trust and confidence in the audience. It can be said that it is the best of TPAs to hire staff to manage their social media accounts 24/7 and interactive communication since it requires dedication and full-time attention.

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