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Evolving concept and popularity of influencers: a literature review

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Abstract

The growth of the internet use is in line with the swift development of social media. For users, social media is no longer just a place to socialize online, but also as source of various information. The shift in this function has provided great opportunities for influencer activities to influence consumer's purchase intention through social media. This activity has grown into a lucrative marketing communications industry, making this a very popular phenomenon. This study aims to discover the shift in influencer concept in historical aspect, and asses the condition and potentials of this industry globally and in Indonesia, by using a literature review approach and various secondary data. This research shows the development of the influencer concept from a traditional context to a more modern context, and 2016 was the first moment of serious growth in this industry. It also concludes that this industry has a promising prospect not only in global market but also Indonesian one.

Keywords: *influencer, influencer marketing, social media*

INTRODUCTION

The Internet of things as part of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has played a major role in changing the way humans live. Within the framework of information technology, the Internet creates a globalization that removes the barriers of distance, space, and time in disseminating information. People can easily access information in real time through a smart device in their hand. The Internet penetration continues to grow as there are 4.95 billion internet users worldwide in 2022 (DataReportal, 2022a).

In line with the growth of internet users, the rapid use of social media in the world becomes so much interesting, accounting for 4.62 billion active social media user accounts in 2022 by a growth value of 10 percent from the previous year (DataReportal, 2022a). This growth has been significant in the past decade. The use of social media, which was originally intended for social activities by sharing stories, experiences, thoughts, and opinions in the social

circle of online users, has turned into an activity of a new business sector with fantastic economic value. This activity is known as influencer marketing.

The increasing growth and interest on social media have led to the emergence of influencers. The influencers here are social media users who habitually present attractive content on their social media accounts so that they attract large followers (or fans) and then become a force to influence the shopping behavior of followers (Gupta & Wadhvani, 2020; Lou, 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ye et al., 2021). The relationship between influencers and followers is in the form of parasocial relationships, where these relationships form pseudo-social interactions and exert influence on fans (Farivar et al., 2021; Pramesthi, 2021). The influence here is closely related to marketing communication which aims to increase buyer interest or persuade consumers' decision to buy. To gain power in the form of this influence, a person needs to carry out the process of forming a celebrity identity over himself through social media. Many people are scrambled to do this process, triggering an increase in influencer activity.

This activity has continued to grow within the past decade transforming into an important strategy in marketing communication to spread the message about the brand or products (Tanwar et al., 2022). Advertisers or companies have a great interest in influencer services because the influencer's contents are considered effective in marketing in more natural manner and closer to the audience than conventional advertising, with the contexts similar as word-of-mouth marketing. However, how did the concept of influencer evolve that it currently only refers to those who are famous on social media? When exactly did the popularity of this influencer activity start to grow rapidly? How did the influencer marketing industry grow in global and Indonesian market? These three questions become important to understand this extraordinary phenomenon of influencer activity, which are also the research questions that will be discussed with a literature review approach.

This literature research is the first to provide an integrative knowledge from multi-perspectives of marketing communication, advertising, and celebrity management on how the influencer concept evolves and shifts on chronological basis of which the way it has been developing through the extended advancement of the Internet and social media. It also discussed on the perspective of business in which this communication activity has been penetrating a significant economic market share lately in global and Indonesian condition, and expanding its great potentials of share. These are the novelty aspect of this research as the key points above are inconclusive and unclear or overlooked by other works and parties, such as government to have a fruitful benefit from the growing market share of this new kind of industry.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the literature review method. In general, this method conducts searching, obtaining, reading, and evaluating previous literatures on the topic discussed (Abbott & Bordens, 2018). Specifically, this study uses an integrative literature review that aims to review the knowledge base and reconceptualize a specific topic that is developing (Snyder, 2019). This type of review requires a more creative

collection of data, since its purpose is not to conclude all articles ever published like what the systematic literature review conducts, but rather to combine perspectives and insights from different fields or traditions of research on a topic, theory, and concept (Snyder, 2019).

The direction of the review in this study was designed for a focus on progression of change in historical concept of influencer that has been present since long time ago, which then has shifted in the past decade. The analysis of this review highlighted the concept level that evolved which was then illustrated by particular relevant examples or phenomena at some key points and periods of the progression of the influencer concept. The analysis process is integratively carried out with the aim of reviewing and adding knowledge base to the evolving of influencer from various perspectives and answering research questions. The concept development was viewed in global context from a number of international articles and other (secondary) facts, where those sources also served for this research to check and conclude the key moment (time) of the start of the popularity of the current sense of influencer term. Meanwhile, the analysis of this review applies for global context, we also checked with the condition of Indonesia as the way we did for the global one by also using secondary data sources, under our presumption that both global and Indonesian context were likely to encounter similar period of the start of this booming phenomenon of influencer activity. If both (global and Indonesia) are not concluded in same time point (such as year) in when this influencer activity rocketed, we argue that the lack of time point between both is very few, because Indonesia is one of the countries with significant increase in active social media users with reached 191.4 million users in 2022 with a growth of 12.6 percent from the previous year (DataReportal, 2022a, 2022b), and in social media penetration within the last decade (Statista, 2021).

This research searched and selected a number of literatures in various related fields such as communication, advertising, marketing, management, celebrities, and business. The selection is carried out based on the ability and relevance of the literatures in providing insights on the topic of influencer development. Data was collected from various sources, which consisted of journal articles and other relevant and supportive sources. The main articles (data) were obtained from Google Scholar. Then, the literatures were analyzed and the important concepts and points are taken according to the context of this paper. This was conducted to build a theoretical background and formulate supporting theories that will be used to build arguments of this review. In addition to literatures, a number of secondary data sources such as reports, internet site articles, Google Trend analysis, and other statistical sources are used to see an overview of the condition and development of the influencer marketing industry globally and within Indonesian context.

Table 1. List of Main Articles Selected

No.	Article Title	Author (Year)	Journa l	Perspe ctive	Summary
1	Expanding the scope of the social response context model	MacDonald , G., Nail, P. R., & Levy, D. A. (2004)	Basic and Applied Social Psychology	Psychology	This research discussed 4-dimensional approach by expanding the social responses characteristics to the social influence which is related to social influencer context. This research supported that the social responses were complex instead of leading to agreeing or disagreeing with the influence.
2	Social Influence: Compliance and Conformity	Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004)	Annual Review of Psychology	Psychology	This research reviewed developments in the social influence field, with a particular focus on compliance and conformity discussion. It supported that social influence required clear idea about change proposed that became the extraordinary responsible of the social influencer.
3	Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review	Erdogan, B. Z. (1999)	Journal of Marketing Management	Marketing; Business	This research determined key potential characteristics in celebrity selection process, extracted from various literatures. It explained that celebrity endorsers has been widely used for marketing communication strategy to communicate that the product is worth buying instead of competitors.
4	Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers	Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017)	Celebrity Studies	Celebrity	This article discussed the rise of concept of self-branding. This concept also has become more important along with the advancement of social media influencer (SMI) activities. This also found how self-branding with a marketing perspective has been common for SMI
5	Korean Celebrity Brand Ambassador as a Strategy to Increase Sales of PT. Shopee Indonesia (Study: "Gfriend" In Shopee 11.11 Big Sale)	Pratami, R., & Sari, A. (2020)	Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi	Marketing Communications	This research tested the integrated marketing communication theory and brand ambassador concept on an e-commerce platform in Indonesia. This supported that brand ambassador utilized brought significant sales of products. This also supported that there were particular strategies in selecting the right celebrity figure.

6	An Investigation into Viewers' Trust in and Response Towards Disclosed Paid-for-Endorsements by YouTube Lifestyle Vloggers	Chapple, C., & Cownie, F. (2017)	Journal of Promotional Communications	Marketing Communications	This study examined trust and response from audience towards disclosed paid-for endorsements by YouTube lifestyle vloggers. This demonstrated that the paid-for endorsement led to increase in opportunistic behavior from viewers, this also concluded some kind of power of celebrities.
7	Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users.	Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017)	Computers in Human Behavior	Psychology	This study examined the effects of Instagram on source credibility, consumer buying intention, and social identification with different types of celebrities. This supported that celebrities on Instagram influenced purchase intention of young females, and also confirmed some kind of power of celebrities.
8	Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit	Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2020)	International Journal of Advertising	Advertising; Business	This study examined the impact of celebrities versus social media influencer (SMI) on effectiveness of advertising. This supported conclusion that people trusted SMI more than traditional media celebrities.
9	The Effect of Influence Type and Performance Outcomes on Attitude toward the Influencer	Scheer, L. K., & Stern, L. W. (1992)	Journal of Marketing Research	Marketing	This study discussed the influencer in context of traditional media celebrities (before social media era). It found that this kind of influencer was affected by the influence type and its performance outcomes. It also supported that celebrity influencers required to maintain their credibility and trust, including in their personal life.

10	Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media	Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019)	Journal of Interactive Advertising	Advertising; Business	This research discussed mechanism framework on how SMI affects consumers through social media platforms. This found that informative value, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity to the followers increased trust in influencers themselves. It also supported that social media has replaced traditional media as source of consuming information.
11	When social media influencers endorse brands: the effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive	Shan, Y., Chen, K.J., & Lin, J. S. (2020)	International Journal of Advertising	Advertising; Business	This study investigated the effects of self-influencer congruence on brand attitude, brand engagement, and purchase interest. It found that effective endorsement outcomes required high congruence between SMI's image and the consumer's self-image leads. This also explained there were shift of cyber fame into profitable business through SMI activities.
12	Effect of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Intention and the Mediating Role of Credibility	Saima, & Khan, M. A. (2021)	Journal of Promotion Management	Management	This study concluded that credibility of SMI and purchase intention from followers were affected by trustworthiness, information quality, and attractive of the influencers themselves.

13	Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude	de Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017)	International Journal of Advertising	Advertising	This study highlighted the need for SMI to cooperating with other SMIs. By following other relevant SMI social media accounts will bring positive impacts on likeability of the SMI him/herself. This also discussed that prospect SMI should established large online social network.
14	Celebrity Personal Branding and Online Bussiness Shop	Yuliani, R., & Dida, S. (2018)	Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi	Marketing Communications	This research found that public identity and credibility of a SMI became unique power of selling point, this would be seen as a reliable source of information .
15	Social Media Influencers and Followers: Theorization of a Trans-Parasocial Relation and Explication of Its Implications for Influencer Advertising	Lou, C. (2021)	Journal of Advertising	Advertising	This study found that persuasion knowledge was not always negative toward advertising outcomes. This would build genuine and transparent image of the SMI from the eyes of the followers, as long as the closeness perceived between SMI and followers are retained.
16	An Empirical Investigation on Source Credibility Of Social Media Influencer in Tier-Ii Cities Of Central India-A Sociological View	Gupta, R., & Wadhwani, T. (2020)	AIMA Journal of Management & Research	Management	This study investigated role of SMIs and their role in decision making of the consumers. This found that trustworthiness and expertise of the SMI were key factors of consumers' decision to purchase.

17	Influencer marketing: brand control, commercial orientation and post credibility	Martínez-López, F. J. et.al. (2020)	Journal of Marketing Management	Marketing; Management	This research confirmed that trust of SMI declined by the posts with perceived commercial orientation more than perceived brand control of the influencer's post. Meanwhile, the trust became more important to predict SMI's post credibility.
18	Trends in Influencer Marketing: A Review and Bibliometric Analysis	Tanwar, A. S., Chaudhry, H., & Srivastava, M. K. (2022)	Journal of Interactive Advertising	Advertising	This study reviewed the literatures on influencer marketing topic on bibliometric and content analysis basis. It delineated trend of works on influencer marketing that shifted along with the advancement of this marketing activity.
19	The influence of "influencer marketing" on YouTube influencers	Acikgoz, F., & Burnaz, S. (2021)	International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising	Marketing; Advertising	This study discussed effects of sponsored content on followers' attitudes towards YouTube influencers and found three factors on those effects. This also suggested that the Youtube is ideal place to market a product as it would provide comprehensive reviews of it visually.
20	Factors affecting YouTube influencer marketing credibility: a heuristic-systematic model	Xiao, M., Wang, R., & Chan-Olmsted, S. (2018)	Journal of Media Business Studies	Business	This research discussed determinants of Youtube SMI's credibility. This also implied the strengths of the platform in this influencer marketing activity.

21	Understanding which cues people use to identify influencer marketing on Instagram: an eye tracking study and experiment	Boerman, S. C., & Müller, C. M. (2022)	International Journal of Advertising	Advertising	This study discussed persuasion knowledge level of SMIs on Instagram. This also implied the charms of Instagram in this advertising bussiness.
22	Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to be Successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co	Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020)	California Management Review	Management	This study discussed characteristiscs of influencer marketing activity on most major platfoms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Tiktok.

The next step was to identify and analyze the trend, gap, key moments, relevant sub-phenomenon, and the progression of influencer activity based on those literatures and secondary data collected, which then produced a thematically chronological review to see the progression of the influencer concept in order to answer the research questions. This analysis is arranged according to themes or contexts based on the history of the development of influencer concept and ended by more detailed explanation of popularity of the influencer term.

Table 2. List of Secondary Data

No.	Type of Data	Author (Year)	Information
1	Report	DataReportal (2022)	Digital 2022 Global Digital Overview; active social media users and its growth worlwide.
2	Report	DataReportal (2022)	Digital 2022 Indonesia; active social media users and its growth ; most visited website; reason for using social media in Indonesia
3	Internet website article	Geyser, W. (2021)	Type of SMI based on number of follower; SMI cost for service.
4	Google Trend analysis.	Google Trends (2022), generated by the authors.	Web Search Interest Trends for the Word 'Influencer' Worldwide, 2010 – March 30, 2022
5	Google Trend analysis.	Google Trends (2022), generated by the authors.	Web Search Interest Trends for the Word 'Influencer' in Indonesia, 2010 – 30 March 2022

6	Internet website article	Santora (2022)	Growth of Global Market Share of Influencer Marketing, 2016 - 2022
7	Report	Statista (2021)	Social Media Penetration in Indonesia, 2017 – 2026

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Context of Social Change

According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, the word *influencer* has two meanings: (1) *someone who affects or changes the way that other people behave*; and (2) *a person who is paid by a company to show and describe its products and services on social media, encouraging other people to buy them* (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

The first meaning of the influencer from this reference is certainly in the context that first existed long before the Internet or social media were invented. In the same dictionary, the meaning of social media refers to websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using computers or mobile phones. Social media is a type of new media because of the invention of the Internet in the era of the mid-1990s, and first came in the form of blogs in the mid-2000s that allowed everyone to build a community of followers through content uploaded on that new media (Burns, 2020). Social media is also known as the media of 'age of sharing' in the form of interactive digital contents through new media using the internet and is becoming important in today's life, even forming a contemporary economic model, known as influencer marketing (Hjorth & Hinton, 2019).

Literally, this first definition can be said to be more associated with the context of social change carried out by influencers as agents of change, which inspires the presence of action and movement, or changes in the behavior of individuals who are targeted for the influence that influencers have. This meaning has divine value.

Social change is driven by an influence with different scopes both in the public, as well as in smaller spaces such as organizational environment, residence, family, and so on. However, the response to these influences is very complex even though in general it only refers to two types, agreement and disagreement (MacDonald et al., 2004). One's desire to respond to this influence needs accurate perception of the reality of the changes offered (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Therefore, these perceptions can be well directed through clarity of ideas of change with good communication strategies. In this situation, communication becomes the main skill that an influencer must have.

Not everyone will become an influencer, but everyone can learn the methods and strategies that are often used by successful influencers. An influencer must need to decide what changes to force, by identifying vital behaviors that should be changed. Then, the influencer needs to measure his ability to change these behaviors through personal motivation, personal ability, social motivation, social ability, structural motivation, and structural ability (Grenny et al., 2013). Thus, this context corresponds to the first

meaning of influencer, who influences the target in effective ways and clear messages to be able to attract conformity and agreement on the ideas conveyed to cause a conversion response in the form of change. In this perspective, being an influencer is possible for everyone, but requires planning, strategy, and measuring abilities in several aspects. This is the arduous task of an 'influencer'.

The most influential influencers are often those who are experts, dedicated, committed, with strong vision in their areas of change, such as science, technology, humanity, peace, and so on. In fact, it is common for influencers to struggle. One name that should be pinned as one of the influential *influencers* is Nelson Mandela. Mandela's struggle succeeded in changing the fate of his nation, his country, and the black race by rejecting the politics of Apartheid or the system of segregation and racial discrimination in South Africa since 1948. This struggle started with himself, his determination to speak for justice did not lack even being imprisoned for 27 years. He showed great courage and dedication. The message that Mandela created in his struggle was able to ignite a spirit of change for racial equality in all parts of the world. This remarkable example reinforces the idea that successful *influencers* are skilled communicators.

Context of Marketing Before the Social Media Era (Before 2005)

The context before the era of social media here is the era before invention of earlier social media Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube in 2005 (Burns, 2020). This era then became the forerunner of the distinction between new media (social media) influencers and traditional marketing influencers (celebrities) in marketing communication. Marketing communication (marcom) aims to create positive image in consumers' mind of the products marketed. In this perspective, strategies to help increase the competitive value of a brand, product or company service are urgently needed. To convey the message that the product is different from competitors' products and is worth buying, the use of celebrity endorsers has become the most widely used communication strategy of the marketing since long ago (Erdogan, 1999). Often the celebrities used in communicating product marketing are actors, sportsmen, models, famous singers, or other figures who are famous for their outstanding achievement in entertainment. These celebrities have power and public recognition (Khamis et al., 2017), which becomes key in the application of their influence on marcom. However, the strategy of selecting the right celebrity figure becomes important for companies have a positive impact from the influence of these celebrities such as increasing sales (Pratami & Sari, 2020).

The similar point between celebrity influencers and social change influencers is both have outstanding achievements in certain field. This achievement transformed into a celebrity power over potential consumers like the power of leaders in the organization to influence employee behavioral change. The different here is the aspect of the expected change goal, the two previous types have better values of carrying out changes for better life or organization. Meanwhile, celebrity influencers have a commercial background; they may not expect a better consumer life, they for sure influence how consumers are interested in the products they communicate.

Michael Jordan is one of the notable celebrity influencers in basketball who partnered with sports shoe and apparel company Nike. The partnership began in 1984, with the rolling out of the Nike Air Jordan basketball shoe product that represents the self-image of the basketball mega star. This partnership continued becoming him as Nike's corporate brand ambassador, as prove of celebrity utilization as influencer in marketing communication (Erdogan, 1999). The magnitude of Michael Jordan's influence on consumers of these shoes has yielded amazing results for Nike, as evidenced by the sales of these products that remain in demand today.

Even though this product is classified as premium, its unique marcom strategy in print media advertising in that time became the key to the success of Air Jordan products (Verma, 2018). Thus, communication becomes important in persuading potential consumers. However, the big question is whether celebrities should be a good communicator or not. When referring to non-interactive media such as printed, video, TV, and radio media, of course this involves the production of content assisted by the company's marketing team in directing the communication of the celebrity influencers. However, in interactive setting, communication skills of the celebrities are required.

Verbal communication skills may be not the first requirement for celebrities to become influencers, but the vital force the celebrities must have is their ability to generate and identify visibility from the public. Celebrities can embody and express mediated identity in the form of personas produced and disseminated through mass media. This identity is the power of celebrities to promote product or brand (Chapple & Cownie, 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020). Therefore, if verbal communication is not the main thing, the aspects that celebrity influencer needs to secure are credibility and trust (Erdogan, 1999; Scheer & Stern, 1992). Those aspects are the reason why audiences believe in the information or messages the celebrity influencers convey.

In conclusion, influencers in this context are those celebrities who first gained fame through traditional media such as film, radio, and TV that are admired by many audiences and considered credible sources of information.

Context of Marketing in Social Media Era

The second meaning of the word *influencer* based on the Cambridge Dictionary narrows to individuals who can spread interest in something, especially a brand, product, or business service to an audience through their social media. Specifically, influencers are those who are paid by companies to introduce and demonstrate the company's products through social media with the aim of persuading the audience to buy. This concept is very contemporary, in contrast to the first concept in the definition of the word *influencer*, where this change in meaning occurred along with the development of the Internet as part of the industrial revolution 4.0, especially the massive use of social media. The aspect of the purpose of change carried by this type of influencer is like what celebrity influencer does, creating a positive image of a product from potential consumers.

The concept here is Social Media Influencer (SMI) and is closely related to marketing communication through new media. This concept comes along with the shift of media landscape where TV, Radio, and newspapers no longer

dominate as information for consumers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This concept is even stronger, when trendsetters on social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter with large followers are aware of this opportunity and turn their cyber fame into profitable business, influencer marketing (Shan et al., 2020). They then deliberately shape consumer perceptions over a brand or product through photos, videos, and other updates in social media (Saima & Khan, 2021).

Influencers in this context are people who build huge online social network followers who followed them and saw them as micro-celebrities. (de Veirman et al., 2017; Shan et al., 2020). The main key in this business is to build personal branding in social media, by developing a public image of oneself to achieve cultural or commercial capital (Khamis et al., 2017). This effort will generate a public identity and credibility that forms the unique strength as a selling point of an influencer as a source of information worth viewing to on social media (Yuliani & Dida, 2018). This is built through content creativity and communication that attracts audiences and offers new trends. The self-branding demands dedication and commitment, just like a start-up company developing its own brand. The representation of an influencer in the virtual space is the result of promoting himself. The success of a social media influencer depends on the self-branding process, which will attract many followers. Once this is achieved, it will be a power to convey its influence in the social media.

Before becoming a commercial influencer, reputation must be built first. This is just like traditional (media) celebrities, who need to build it in their fields such as acting, sports, and music before becoming commercial influencer. This reputation requires strong efforts. It may be easy for traditional celebrities when making their way onto social media, they at least had reputation capital built up before, but this will not guarantee a success in the social media.

Social media influencers can be said to be those who build a reputation for knowledge and expertise in certain topics and share content about them regularly through their social media channels, thus generating many followers from enthusiasm and attention to the influencer's figures and contents. This reputation can be measured by the approach of the follower's number. The more the followers mean the greater the influence of influencer. Influencers can be divided into five tiers, nano (1,000–10,000 followers), micro (10,000–50,000 followers), meso- (50,000–500,000 followers) macro (500,000–1,000,000 followers) and mega (more than 1,000,000 followers) (Geyser, 2021) The number of followers not only indicates the size of influencer's power but also determine tariffs in this business practice.

Social media gives opportunities for anyone to become an influencer in endorsement practices. It allows casual users to share stories and/or distinctive contents, which will then provide an opportunity for them to become popular with lot of fans. These followers will be targets of influence to obtain economic or social gain, such as through endorsement activities. This achievement process involves micro-celebrity practice, cultivating the audience in a planned, structured, and strategic manner through social media to obtain celebrity status (Khamis et al., 2017). However, in the end, only limited users of social media are labeled as influencers. Anyone can freely

claim himself as an influencer regardless of the number of followers. But in this industry, there must be a clear measure validating correctness of influence. Advertisers will not carelessly pay a large fee for this service without seeing the true influence of an influencer through the number and characteristics of followers. The number of followers may be used as validation of the influencer's influence, but the match of the influencer's profile with the product promoted is also important consideration from the advertisers.

Then, who is more effective in marketing communication between celebrities and social media influencers? Several studies argue that (social media) influencers tend to be more effective than traditional (media) celebrities. One of the reasons is that influencers are considered more credible as they are closer to the daily lives of followers; looking like ordinary, natural, and honest persons in providing views on the product (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou, 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Schouten et al., 2020; Shan et al., 2020). This study does not try to prove that finding but highlights another phenomenon where traditional celebrities came to this influencer industry by bringing their existing stardom capital into social media to become influencers, such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Raditya Dika (Indonesian celebrity). Vice versa, there are also many influencers who enter the world of traditional (media) celebrities such as being movie stars, hosts, and advertising stars. The question of effectiveness becomes difficult to answer for the figures that play in these both media.

However, for influencers (micro-celebrities) who have purely pioneered their reputation on social media from the beginning and are consistent with this path, the aspect that needs to be maintained for them is the identity of 'ordinary person' formed in the public eye over him. This identity provides an affinity between himself and followers, so that followers feel an equal connection that is more effective in communicating products. This relationship makes followers will feel more honesty for what influencers convey than celebrity megastars do. This is the great power of influencers.

Popularity of Influencers

Influencer activity in cyberspace started in the early 2000s, when blogging platforms were growing rapidly and accessible to the wider public such as WordPress and Blogger. This was the era when people started writing and sharing about their personal lives and thoughts to the public through the Internet. Then, more interactive, and attractive social media platforms came into the limelight. They are growing and turning into a means of activity for social media influencers, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and so on.

Advancement of the Internet and social media in this decade has further strengthened the position of social media influencers (Gupta & Wadhwani, 2020; Jung & Im, 2021; Martínez-López et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020; Shan et al., 2020), which has shifted the types of influencers that have been discussed earlier. Even today, the word influencer has referred only to concept of social media influencers. No wonder when we do a search on internet search engines with the keyword 'influencer', then what are displayed on the results page are news, articles, photos, and videos referring to the influencer's social media. We will no longer find non-commercial influencers such as in

the social, economic, technological on the first page; even on the hundredth page it is still dominated by social media influencers. In directories or searches for articles of scientific journals such as Google Scholar, the search of word 'influencer' also produces findings of articles dominated by influencer social media topics.

Then, the big question that arises is since when has the term influencer become limited only to those who are popular on social media with a lot of followers as a target of influence on the products they promote. Web search data on Google Trends on search interest for the word 'influencer' from the period of early 2010 to March 31, 2022 (Figure 1) for the whole world shows a trend that began to increase from mid-2016, then peaked in early 2021. Although it has experienced fluctuations since the beginning of the increase, in general it has experienced a significant increase to date.

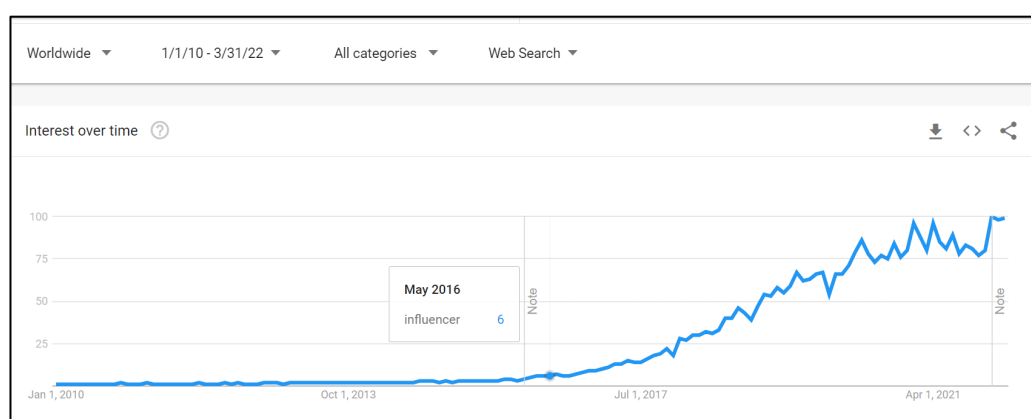


Figure 1. Web Search Interest Trends for the Word 'Influencer' Worldwide, 2010 – March 30, 2022

Source: (Google Trends, 2022, generated by the authors)

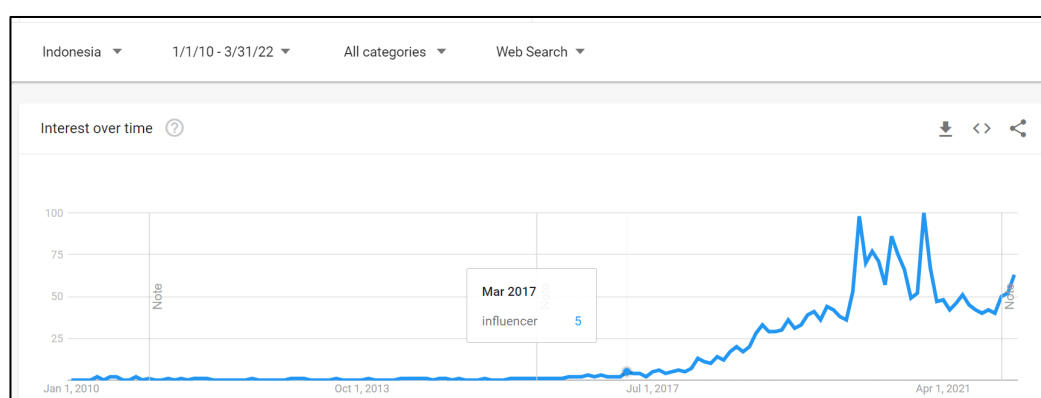


Figure 2. Web Search Interest Trends for the Word 'Influencer' in Indonesia, 2010 – 30 March 2022

Source: (Google Trends, 2022, generated by the authors)

Meanwhile, in Indonesia the trend of increasing searches for the word 'influencer' began in March 2017 and increased very significantly in March 2020 to 98% from 35% in February 2020. Then, this trend fluctuated and peaked to 100% in January 2021, and continued with a drastic decline in the following month (February – March 2021). Until now, the search trend has fluctuated from the range of 39% to 54% (March 2022).

The results of Tanwar et al. (2022) research on influencer marketing research trends from the Scopus database in the period 2011 – 2019, which were analyzed using bibliometric methods showed that the increase in the number of articles and the productivity of authors has begun to occur since 2016 and peaked in 2019 with a positive trend. In terms of forecasts, it also shows the potential or opportunity for an increase in the number of studies on social media influencers to date. Another interesting finding is that the words 'influencer marketing' and 'social media' have increased consistently as the most frequently used words in journal articles they have analyzed since 2016. While the word 'Social Marketing Influencer' or 'influencer' increased sharply after 2017.

Google Trends data in Figure 1 and 2 shows the indication that the activities of influencers began to be popular in 2016 in the world and 2017 in Indonesia. The Big Data approach from the Google Trends is indeed based on people's interest in word searches on Google Search, but this interest does not appear immediately for no reason. Of course, this interest and curiosity for information is in line with or as a response to the rapid phenomenon that existed in both years. Meanwhile, the findings of Tanwar et al. represent the similar year, 2016, as the year when the number of research on social media influencers began to increase drastically. This also validates the indication that 2016 was the year of the rapid growth of social media influencer activity which was a phenomenon worthy of response by researchers in their scientific literatures. Thus, it can be concluded that 2016 was the year of the popularity of social media influencer activities or became a moment where the activities were noticed by many people. Then, this activity developed into a business or marketing communication industry with increasing economic value to date.

Growth of Influencer Marketing Industry.

The significant development of the digital world makes information easier to obtain in real time. Technology advancement for various smart devices accessing the internet has also made easier for people to access information. No exception does social media also dominate the destinations accessed by the Internet users. There were 4.67 billion active social media users worldwide in January 2022 with a growth of 10.1 percent from the previous year, in Indonesia the figure reached 191.4 million users with a growth of 12.6 percent from the previous year (DataReportal, 2022a, 2022b). In other words, the later number reached almost 70 percent of the total Indonesian population. This growth is a good indicator as a guarantee of bright future of the social media influencer marketing industry in Indonesia which continues to grow.

As the internet and social media users grow, the influencer marketing industry is also following the same trend. This can be seen from the increase in the value of the global market share of the industry on a consistent basis since 2016 from 1.7 billion US dollars to 13.8 billion US dollars in 2021. This value is expected to continue to rise to 16.4 billion US dollars by the end of 2022 (Figure 3). This economic value is fantastic for the industry that is still relatively new. The growth of this industry is also marked by the increasing number of companies that support influencer marketing activities, such as agencies that offer influencer services to companies, or connect influencer figures with companies, provide consulting services for selecting the right

influencers and content creation. This growth reached 26% in 2021 with a total of 18,900 influencer marketing companies around the world.

The increase in social media penetration in Indonesia (Figure 4), indicates that the activities of social media influencers will still receive a large and increasing response and attention from social media users. This indication is also supported by the level of reasons for using social media in Indonesia to 'look for something to do or buy' by 50 percent and to 'search for products to buy' by 36 percent (DataReportal, 2022b). Both figures are high considering the most reason for being 'connecting with friends and relatives' at 58 percent. These indicators reflect the condition of the influencer business that has bright prospects for years to come.

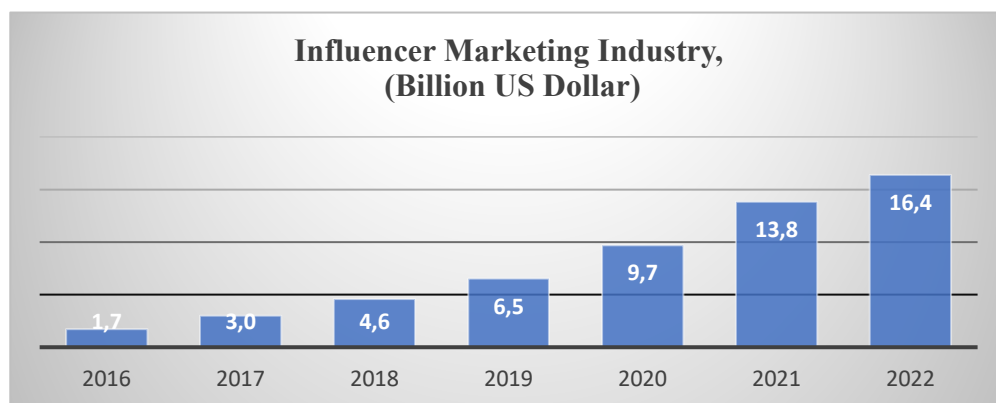


Figure 3. Growth of Global Market Share of Influencer Marketing, 2016 – 2022

Source: (Santora, 2022)

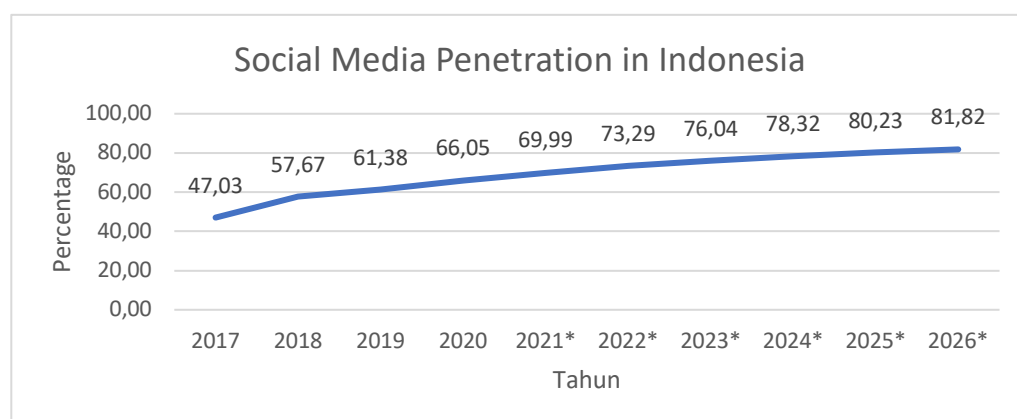


Figure 4. Social Media Penetration in Indonesia, 2017 – 2026 (%)

Source: (Statista, 2021)

*: *Forecast Numbers*

In Indonesia, the YouTube platform is the most visited social media website every day (DataReportal, 2022b). YouTube is also the most preferred platform by influencers as a channel to upload their contents because it is considered as the platform that attracts the most people's attention and the most ideal as a place to market products, so many companies choose to collaborate with YouTube influencers (Acikgoz & Burnaz, 2021; Xiao et al., 2018). From the aspect of content, the art & entertainment line or theme is the most produced by influencers in Indonesia, where YouTube is very

suitable for this type of theme. YouTube itself is mostly filled by nano and micro-class influencers, where these two types are the largest group compared to mega- and macro-class influencers. These three findings are corresponding facts that further strengthen YouTube as the channel with the highest amount of influencer activities contents. Especially with the presence of a new feature 'short video' on YouTube, which may be in response to the success of TikTok with this concept, it is an interesting choice for influencers to upload their content on the new YouTube feature.

For the purpose of a brand campaign, the Instagram is a social media channel that is often used as this channel has its own charm that is suitable for various types of contents. When looking further on this platform, the mega-class influencers (with followers above one million) in Indonesia are more active on Instagram media. This is a strong reason why the campaign is happening more on Instagram. Of course, efforts to increase awareness require greater involvement of influencer figures. Then, the Instagram users have a good knowledge in distinguishing commercial posts from non-commercial ones, so they are aware of the purpose of persuasion of the campaign (Boerman & Müller, 2022).

TikTok became the social media with the fastest market growth in Indonesia since its inception in 2017 (Bulele, 2020). TikTok managed to take the hearts of Indonesian social media users by being listed as the second largest market in the world in 2020, by 22 million monthly active users. TikTok, which is known for its video challenge contents, has now developed with more diverse and rich information contents, one of which is influencer marketing content. The success of TikTok is inseparable from the concept of 'short video' it carries. The short video feature becomes interesting with entertaining effect features. The video content creation instruments or tools provided by TikTok are relatively easy to apply. These factors make TikTok increasingly loved by influencers and audience, especially the younger generation (Haenlein et al., 2020). The rapid growth of this *platform* has also strengthened the influencer industry in Indonesia today and for many years to come.

In this industry, the Twitter has a fairly good market share, which is in fourth place after the three platforms above (Geyser, 2021). The growth of Twitter influencers in Indonesia, although not as big as TikTok and Instagram, is still showing a positive increase. This can be seen from many recommendations of Indonesian Twitter influencers with various product match categories offered by the agency companies such as SociaBuzz. The classes of influencers also vary from nano to mega type. The advantage of Twitter is its high engagement rate, which can optimize the spread of influence of the influencer. Meanwhile, Facebook has the smallest influencer market share compared to others. The advantage of Facebook itself is its compatibility with the contents aimed at developing brand awareness. The new 'short video' feature on Facebook has contributed to the growth of the influencer marketing industry (Santora, 2022). This feature is also targeted by Indonesian *influencers* as a channel to expand their video content uploads.

The development of marketing agencies has also emerged along with the development of influencer phenomena. The agencies exist as liaison between advertisers and influencers. The agencies also regularly measure

influencers' key performance indicators (KPIs) and provide advice for advertisers to choose the right influencer profile for product compliance. There are many influencer marketing agencies in Indonesia that we can find, such as AJ Marketing, Partipost, SociaBuzz, Narrators, Mediatics, Creative Media United, and so on. These agencies also get a lot of clients from large companies in Indonesia to obtain influencer marketing services. Globally, corporate spending on influencer service fees continues to rise (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Santora, 2022). No exception in Indonesia, spending for this purpose will also continue to increase as an effort to increase public awareness, sales, favorability, and loyalty to the products being promoted.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the development of influencer marketing within the framework of the marketing communication industry, especially marketing through social media, is important for the Indonesian economy. The growth of potential market, active users of social media, and agency companies supporting this industry is a strong reason for the bright prospects of influencer marketing in Indonesia. The greater the growth of the influencer marketing industry will certainly have an impact on the growth of other industries it promotes. Therefore, the phenomenon of influencer marketing should be examined not only from the aspect of communication activity, but also from the perspective of being a specific new communication industry, which provides opportunities for anyone to be involved in this industry because social media blurs the boundaries between content producers and consumers.

This research also shows that the popularity of influencers as a marketing communication activity through social media began to soar in 2016 either in the world or in Indonesia. The year 2016 was an important moment indicating that this activity began to be loved by many people and was considered as a serious industry, so researchers and governments should be able to see economic growth in this sector starting in that year. Meanwhile, in context of Indonesia this study implied that the year 2017 was the year when this influencer phenomenon started to appear and later gained its fame in 2021, and with potential accrual to this date. As a suggestion, the accurate data or measurement of the number and income of influencers should be considered or discussed in further research in order to obtain more comprehensive investigation results in further exploration, given that this industry has magnitude of the potential economic value.

This study contributes to the knowledge on how the influencer concept evolves as now the influencer term is merely common to the meaning of those who conduct marketing practice through social media along with shift of media landscape. This also contributes and how influencer activity grew into significant market value, which started raise flag from 2016 worldwide and 2017 in Indonesia. As an implication of this study, our findings suggest that to gain deeper understanding on growth of this activity either on advertising or marketing communication perspective, the time series analysis is crucially required by employing influencer marketing data which involves the condition of 2016 and 2017.

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