

Original Article

The Role of Digital Technology Competency in the Optimization of Digital Advocacy Models in Distro Business in the New Normal Era

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to identify the variables that may have an impact on the ability of Bandung's distribution business to harness e-advocacy. Due to altered customer behaviour, the post-Covid-19 pandemic environment presents new commercial issues. Particularly in post-market circumstances Covid-19, strategic marketing becomes a strategy for businesses to continue to be able to increase consumer loyalty. Businesses have the choice to promote the digitalization that is currently available by using digital marketing. This study paradigm helped to create the idea of customer advocacy from a strategic marketing angle, which is still hardly ever researched. The information was gathered through an online poll administered by researchers from Bandung-based companies in the distribution sector. Using Smart Partial Least Squares (PLS) software, data were examined based on validity construct, convergent validity, and structural equation modelling. The results obtained from 220 respondents stated that all hypotheses were accepted with positive and significant results. Future research is anticipated to benefit from this study both conceptually and managerially.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, E-advocacy Leverage Capacity, New Normal Era.

I. INTRODUCTION

Advocacy provides change to the relationship between brands and consumers (Bhati & Verma, 2020). The company involves consumers in marketing activities with the aim of making consumers trust and loyal to the company. Advocates are consumers who actively disseminate recommendations about a product or service to other consumers (Fullerton, 2011). Consumers become advocates if they get a positive impression, where the company provides products or services according to what consumers want (White & Schneider, 2000).

When customers feel strongly about a brand, they become brand champions. Company managers measure the willingness of consumers to provide positive recommendations because of their assessment of the company and its performance (Bhati & Verma, 2020). Because customers will only passionately support items, services, brands, and companies when they have strong feelings about them, experts contend that advocacy is a much greater measure of consumer loyalty than recurrent purchase behaviour. (Mazzarol et al., 2007).

Advocacy provides space for consumers to talk back about their experiences with a product or service (Peterson, 2020). Social media provides a competitive advantage for companies that will carry out promotions through positive messages (Dreher, 2014). Companies that engage in advocacy can significantly improve a company's reputation and foster strong customer relationships. (van Zoonen et al., 2014).

Researchers look at digital advocacy from a strategic management perspective. Advocacy is carried out by companies with the aim that business can make efforts to influence consumers and these consumers can advocate for other consumers. Previous research was limited to discussing advocacy from the consumer's point of view, while in this research, advocacy is examined from the point of view of business. Consumer advocacy behaviour adheres to the 5A idea, according to which the digital era's five stages of the purchasing decision process are awareness, appeal, asking, acting, and advocacy (Kotler et al., 2017).

Dynamics marketing is explained through Promotion appeal and digital affinity direction are the two key factors that significantly influence the capacity to utilise e-advocacy. In the company's efforts to promote consumer advocacy, other factors like market preference enhancement and customer retention quality do not have a substantial impact (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Previous studies using similar variables have found that loyal consumers are not always able to refer other consumers to consume the product. Due to a lack of consumer commitment to the product in terms of promoting or making referrals, it is

difficult to make recommendations. Consumers are committed to continuing to consume products and services if the company can provide the best service (Bhati & Verma, 2020). Consumers are unable to reference products because there is no strong bond between consumers and companies. Previous research has found that satisfied consumers are not always willing to refer others to a product (Budiarani et al., 2021). Business use digital advantages such as data analytics, social media, and high-tech tools with the aim of improving customer relationships (McCarthy et al., 2021).

To achieve business transformation goals that are consistent with information technology, digital technology competence supports a methodical approach that focuses on transforming the entire organisation and mobilising firm resources throughout the entire organisational structure (Kutnjak et al., 2019). Business can create new business opportunities and value for customers. Digital technology competence can be a variable that moderates customer advocacy (McCarthy et al., 2021). Previous research related to the company's strategy for consumer intervention, stated that the consumer's intention to convey advocacy was directly influenced by satisfaction and indirectly by product quality and service quality (Lee et al., 2018).

Fashion companies in Bandung are in second place, after culinary companies (Kemenparekraf). The fashion sub-sector has an advantage in terms of employment, which continues to grow rapidly. The fashion industry in Bandung has various types, one of which is a distribution outlet or distro. Distro is a place for clothing manufacturers to deposit their products, even though currently distros are developing by producing their own clothes or local brands (cnnindonesia.com, 2017). Since early 2007, distribution growth has been very rapid in Bandung. Products sold in distribution outlets have their own value compared to other fashion products, where the design and type of screen printing used are characteristic of clothing sold in distribution outlets.

Distro is a place for clothing manufacturers to deposit their products, even though currently distros are developing by producing their own clothes or local brands (cnnindonesia.com, 2017). The growth of the fashion business, which can contribute about 18.01% or IDR 116 trillion to Indonesia's creative economy, has a significant impact. This is due to the fact that there are now several fashion trends that are still evolving, one of which is the consumption of ready-to-wear clothing. Data from the 2020 Indonesian Business Field Standard Classification (KBLI), notes that the apparel industry has the most business units, with a total of 503 units (bandungkota.bps.go.id, 2020).

There are many actors in the distro business in Bandung, so distro business need to carry out marketing strategies that are right on target in order to fulfill consumer desires, one of which is through digital marketing. Distro is managed by conventional production to marketing processes. Distro consumers have a large number, which distro business actors should be able to take advantage of by utilizing online marketing. Digitalization is applied to the clothing business with the aim of facilitating the relationship between business and consumers who will buy products.

Marketing by utilizing digital or online media is currently a method that is widely used by manufacturers because this method more easily depicts brands, personalities, identities, and designs through visualization to consumers (Magrath & McCormick, 2013). Changes in the lifestyle of consumers change how consumers behave in consuming goods or services. Consumers will look for information that is easy to obtain, one of which is using digital media or social media.

The content provided by businesses on social media is a way to provide more complete product information to consumers changing the mindset from offline physical shopping will temporarily trigger interesting behaviors from a progressive shopping experience. Marketers need knowledge to understand consumer lifestyles so that they can communicate well and develop marketing strategies effectively (Sung & Jeon, 2009).

Online platforms like using different social media are a part of digital marketing. Consumers use various social media for various reasons, some will seek information to gain new knowledge while others prefer to share or re-upload specific information that they find interesting to inform others. Social media has an impact on consumer behavior, such as attitudes, satisfaction, and perceptions of the product (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Online shopping has revolutionized marketing for many business, where consumers are used to online purchases and the ease of transactions (Bellini & Aiolfi, 2020). Business who uses online media need to continue to develop their ability to use technology. Because of the dominance of digital marketing, branding, and creative technology integration with current fashion trends, the world of fashion has emerged. Because consumers have easy access to the internet, digital media has become more accessible to them (Rathnayaka, 2018).

The Covid-19 epidemic struck several nations in 2020, including Indonesia. The existence of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a slowdown in the fashion business, so many companies are struggling to survive and deal with disruptions to consumer demand for a product (McMaster et al., 2020). Covid-19 is a challenge for business uncertainty. Digital marketing is the chosen way to continue to reach consumers despite the Covid-19 pandemic. The new normal era that emerged since the

Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in Indonesia, has changed how consumers behave with increasing preferences to order and consume a product through digital, such as social media Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, or marketplace platforms.

According to the Mckinsey report, the results showed that consumers from all over the world felt a psychological impact because the crisis had changed consumer behavior around the world as evidenced by different buying patterns. The new normal era of Covid-19 has resulted in permanent behavior changes by consumers. The development of consumer buying behavior can be a support for local business and holistic buying goals, while quality continues to be a major driving force and an important consideration.

Advocacy is influenced by the power possessed by business to be able to maintain customer retention. Customers who are satisfied and have positive experiences tend to advocate for other customers to consume an item. Current developments provide an innovation in which advocacy can also be influenced through affinity directing. Digital marketing is carried out by various business, encouraging digital affinity leads through the role of social media which can be more easily carried out by companies to make customers become advocates for other customers.

This research seeks to identify what variables influence e-advocacy leverage capacity as the goal for business in a marketing strategy that is still limited. These factors include promotional allure, market preference enhancement, digital affinity direction, quality of customer retention, and moderator factor, which is digital technological proficiency.

Researchers use digital technology competency moderation variables, referring to research Setiawan et al., (2022) who get that result consumer retention quality no effect on e-advocacy leverage capacity. Variable digital technology competency be a moderating variable between consumer retention quality and e-advocacy leverage capacity, as in the statement McCarthy et al., (2021) businesses that use digital advantages (such as data analytics, social media, and embedded smart devices) advocate for and cultivate a passion for digital transformation in business with the goal of improving customer relationships, thereby adding value to their business.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Researchers formulate a research framework based on previous research conducted Badrinarayanan & Sierra, (2018); Sashi et al., (2019); Bilro et al., (2018); Setiawan et al., (2022). In that study, the variables used included promotional attractiveness, market preference enhancement, digital affinity direction, customer retention quality, and e-advocacy leverage capacity.

In this study, researchers added digital technology competency as a moderator variable. This variable was chosen referring to previous research conducted by Kutnjak et al., (2019) and research by McCarthy et al., (2021) which states that digital technology competency can transform digital approaches to organizations or business. The link between the customer retention quality variable and the e-advocacy leverage capacity variable is moderated by the digital technological competency variable. Moderation is only used to test the effect of these two variables, not to moderate other variables.

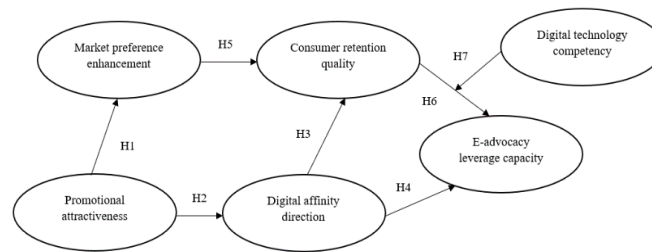


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Source: Processed secondary data 2022

Based on previous research, the researcher formulated the research framework as follows:

H1: Promotional Attractiveness has a positive effect on Market Preference Enhancement

H2: Promotional Attractiveness has a positive effect on Digital Affinity Direction

H3: Digital Affinity Direction has a positive effect on Consumer Retention Quality

H4: Digital Affinity Direction has a positive effect on E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity

H5: Market Preference Enhancement has a positive effect on Consumer Retention Quality

H6: Consumer Retention Quality has a positive effect on E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity

H7: Digital Technology Competency moderates between Consumer Retention Quality and E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity

The type of research to be conducted is quantitative research. According to Cooper & Schindler (2014) quantitative research tries to measure the exact size of something. The data collection technique is in the form of a survey which will be given to respondents in the form of an online questionnaire via the Google Forms platform. Researchers will use a self-administered survey. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014) self-administrated surveys are by distributing self-administered surveys via mail, computer, e-mail, internet, or a combination of these. To make sure that respondents fit the goal requirements, screening questions are employed in the questionnaire. Only those who successfully navigate the screening process are allowed to take the survey.

A likert scale with a five-scale computation was employed in this investigation. Score 1 for the answer strongly disagree and point 5 for the answer strongly agree. In this study, researchers will use a population of 255 distro. The population consists of distro business in Bandung who are registered in the data from the West Java Province Industry and Trade Office (2019), data from the Bandung City Cooperative and MSME Office, as well as field data obtained from distro business in Bandung Raya based on data from the distribution business center in Bandung. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that was utilised in this investigation. The questionnaires were sent to the intended respondents after the researchers ran a pilot test to ensure their validity and dependability. The PLS-SEM version of the structural equation modelling (SEM) model is used in this work. In SEM testing, three tests were carried out, namely the outer model, inner model, and hypothesis testing.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Characteristics Respondents

The characteristics of the respondents were divided into several categories based on several question items posed, namely the products sold and the social media used.

Table 1: Description of Respondents Based on Products Sold

Product	Amount	Percentage
T-shirt	217	98.6%
Shirt	171	77.7%
Pants	80	36.4%
Jackets/Sweaters/Hoodies	150	68.2%
Hat	58	26.4%
Belt	13	5.9%

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

Based on the products sold, Table 1 displays the respondents' characteristics. Researchers provide choices to respondents to choose more than one answer or more than one product choice. Respondents can choose one or more answer choices based on what products the respondent sells. Researchers provide product choices, namely clothes, shirts, pants, jackets/sweaters/hoodies, hats, and belts. Products sold by respondents are distributed. Clothing products 98.6%, shirts 77.7%, pants 36.4%, jackets/sweaters/hoodies 68.2%, hats 26.4%, and belts 5.9%.

Table 2: Description of Respondents Based on Social Media Used

Social media	Amount	Percentage
Facebook	19	8.6%
Instagram	218	99.1%
TikTok	15	6.8%
Twitter	0	0
YouTube	0	0
line	3	1.4%

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

Based on social media platforms utilised to market and sell products, Table 2 displays the characteristics of respondents. Researchers provide choices to respondents to choose more than one answer or more than one social media choice. Respondents can choose one or more answer options based on which social media they use. The researcher provides a choice of social media, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, and Line. The social media used by respondents is distributed. Instagram is the most used social media with a percentage of 99.1%, Facebook is 8.6%, TikTok is 6.8%, Line is 1.4%, Twitter and YouTube are not used by respondents.

B. Outer Model Test

The outer loading value is > 0.5 overall, which means that the constructs for all variables can be regarded as valid, according to the value of the outer model or the correlation between the constructs and variables. The outcome of the initial structural model for the outer model is as follows.

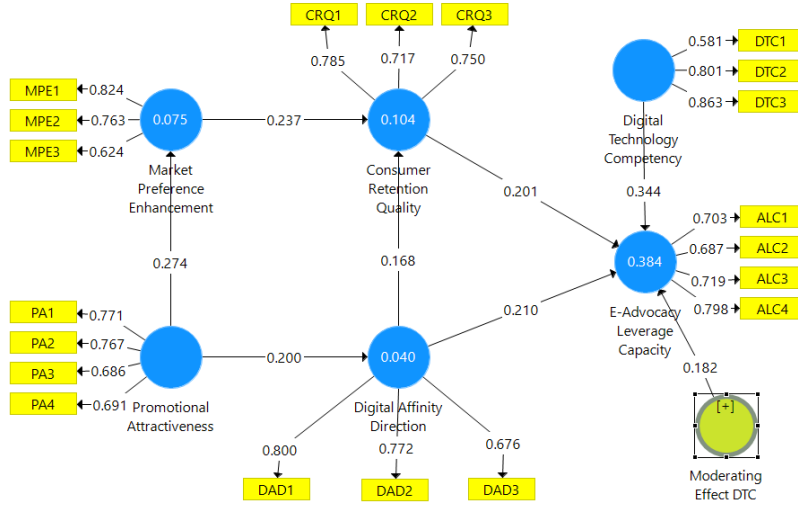


Figure 2. Outer Model

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

The outer loading value was used to evaluate validity, and average variance extracted was used to test discriminant validity (AVE). The findings of the study are as follows.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Testing

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Promotional Attractiveness	0.533
Market Preference Enhancement	0.550
Digital Affinity Directions	0.564
Consumer Retention Quality	0.564
E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity	0.530
Digital Affinity Directions	0.564
Average	0.533

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

To determine how drastically different the variables were from one another, researchers examined discriminant validity. All variables have an AVE value > 0.5 , making this test valid. The value seen in this test is the average variance extracted (AVE) value.

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	CRQ	DAD	DTCs	ALC	MPE	PA
Consumer Retention Quality	0.751					
Digital Affinity Directions	0.226	0.751				
Digital Technology Competency	0.400	0.232	0.758			
E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity	0.432	0.341	0.487	0.728		
Market Preference Enhancement	0.279	0.247	0.181	0.330	0.742	
Promotional Attractiveness	0.290	0.200	0.242	0.343	0.274	0.730

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

Results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion between all latent variables are shown in Table 4. The table demonstrates that compared to other constructs, an indicator has a higher value when calculating variables. According to these findings, each indicator utilised has strong discriminant validity to create its respective variables.

To determine if the variables employed in this study were reliable or not, the researcher performed a reliability test. Value Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability are used in reliability testing.

Table 5: Reliability Testing

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Rule of Thumb	Model Evaluation
Promotional Attractiveness	0.711	0.820	> 0.70	Reliable
Market Preference Enhancement	0.610	0.784		Reliable
Digital Affinity Directions	0.615	0.794		Reliable
Consumer Retention Quality	0.614	0.795		Reliable
E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity	0.706	0.818		Reliable
Digital Technology Competency	0.630	0.798		Reliable

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

The constructs for all variables match the requirements, as shown in Table 5. In order to claim that all variables are reliable, researchers use Cronbach's Alpha and composites > 0.70 as the suggested requirement.

C. Inner Model

To determine the link between the constructs, the significance level, and the R-square of the research model, the researcher ran an inner model test. The significance of the structural path parameter coefficients and the R-square for the dependent construct t test were used to assess the structural model.

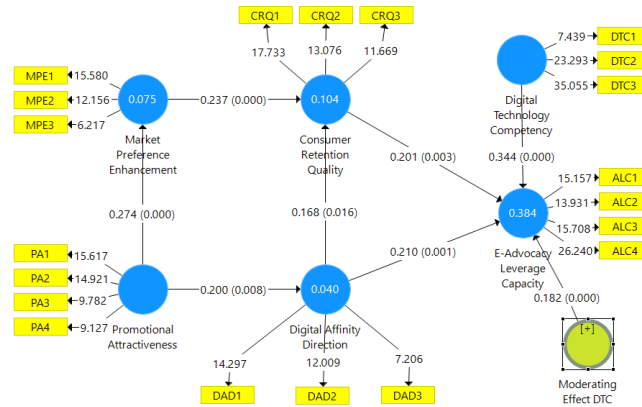


Figure 3. Inner Model

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

By examining the R-square and Q-square for each dependent latent variable, researchers evaluate the PLS model. The results of utilising SmartPLS to estimate R-square and Q-square are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: R Square and Q Square

Variable	R Square	Q Square
Market Preference Enhancement	0.075	0.034
Consumer Retention Quality	0.104	0.046
Digital Affinity Directions	0.040	0.019
E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity	0.384	0.186
Average	0.151	0.071

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

D. Hypothesis Testing

The output path coefficient's value serves as the foundation for testing the hypothesis. Three criteria are used in hypothesis testing: the original sample, t-statistics, and p-value. The original sample which has a positive value means a positive effect, T-statistics is used to show the level of significance expected to have a value > 1.96 so that the hypothesis can be said to be accepted, and the p-value has a standard value of < 0.05 so that the hypothesis can be said to be accepted.

Table 7: Direct Influence Analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Means (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Promotional Attractiveness -> Market Preference Enhancement	0.274	0.291	0.064	4,267	0.000
Promotional Attractiveness -> Digital Affinity Direction	0.200	0.209	0.082	2,439	0.008
Digital Affinity Direction -> Consumer Retention Quality	0.168	0.174	0.078	2,160	0.016
Digital Affinity Direction -> E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity	0.210	0.220	0.066	3,195	0.001
Market Preference Enhancement -> Consumer Retention Quality	0.237	0.243	0.064	3,692	0.000
Consumer Retention Quality -> E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity	0.201	0.202	0.072	2,789	0.003
Moderating Effect DTC -> E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity	0.182	0.180	0.049	3,724	0.000

Source: Primary data processed, 2022

Hypothesis 1.

According to the findings of hypothesis testing 1, there is a correlation between the variables Promotional Attractiveness and Market Preference Enhancement, which has an estimated value of 0.274. (positive). P-values of $0.000 < 0.05$ and statistical t values of $4.267 > 1.645$ lead to the conclusion that the hypothesis H1 is accepted, which states that promotional attractiveness significantly improves market preference.

Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis testing 2's findings indicate that the association variable Promotional Attractiveness to Digital Affinity Directions has an estimated value of 0.200. (positive). Therefore, based on statistical t values of $2.439 > 1.645$ and p-values of $0.008 < 0.05$, it can be said that Promotional Attractiveness has a sizable positive impact on Digital Affinity Direction, and H2 is accepted.

Hypothesis 3.

According to the findings of hypothesis testing number three, there is a varied link. The Consumer Retention Quality factors' estimated value for Digital Affinity Direction is 0.168. (positive). In light of the statistical t-values of $2.160 > 1.645$ and the p-values of $0.016 < 0.05$, it can be said that H3 is accepted. Digital Affinity Directions has a strong beneficial impact on consumer retention quality.

Hypothesis 4.

The findings of hypothesis testing 4 indicate that there is a variable association between variables E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity and Digital Affinity Directions, with an estimated value of 0.210. (positive). In light of the statistical t values of $3.195 > 1.645$ and the p-values of $0.001 < 0.05$, it can be said that H4 is supported by the considerable beneficial influence of Digital Affinity Directions on E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity.

Hypothesis 5.

The findings of hypothesis testing number five indicate that there is a varied link between market preference enhancement and factors, with an estimated value of 0.237. (positive). The conclusion that Market Preference Enhancement has a considerable positive influence on Consumer Retention Quality is supported by statistical t values of $3.392 > 1.645$ and p-values of $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, H5 is accepted.

Hypothesis 6.

The findings of testing hypothesis 6 indicate that the estimated value for the link between the variables E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity and Consumer Retention Quality is 0.201. (positive). It can be inferred that Consumer Retention Quality has a substantial positive effect on E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity since the statistical t-value is $2.789 > 1.645$ and the p-value is $0.003 < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 7.

According to the findings of testing hypothesis number seven, the link between the variables Consumer Retention Quality, E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity, and Moderated Digital Technology Competency indicates an estimated value of 0.182. (positive). The conclusion that Digital Technology Competency moderates between Consumer Retention Quality and E-Advocacy Leverage Capacity and H7 is accepted is supported by p-values of $0.000 < 0.05$ and statistical t values of $3.724 > 1.645$.

IV. CONCLUSION

Enhancing market preference is positively and significantly impacted by promotional attractiveness. These results are in accordance with the implementation of distro business in the city of Bandung. The social media used is an attractive promotional medium for consumers. Digital affinity orientation is positively and significantly influenced by promotional attractiveness. Consumers have been shown to be drawn to purchase items by appealing promotions on social media that use a variety of colours, showcase photos, write promotional editorials, and run regular promotions.

Consumer retention quality is positively and significantly impacted by digital affinity direction. Distro business actors who involve consumers through digital media can maintain consumer retention. Digital affinity is proven to be able to direct consumers to be loyal and to buy products again. The ability to harness e-advocacy is positively and significantly impacted by digital affinity direction. Digital media in the form of social media that is used by distribution business actors in promoting and selling their products can become an intermediary for consumers in conducting advocacy.

The quality of consumer retention is positively and significantly impacted by market preference enhancement. Social media is capable of being a medium that provides other choices for consumers to choose from. A distribution company will succeed in retaining customers if it can keep up with market demands. The ability for e-advocacy leverage is positively and significantly impacted by consumer retention quality. Consumers who are loyal to distro business products are able to become advocates on social media. Distro business actors who are able to satisfy consumers through the products they sell can create a positive impression so that consumers are willing to become advocates on social media.

The ability to use e-advocacy is positively and significantly impacted by consumer retention quality, which is tempered by digital technology proficiency. The competence of employees working to manage social media distribution businesses has proven to strengthen the relationship between consumer retention and digital advocacy. Employees who can manage social media optimally, such as regularly replying to consumer direct messages, providing up-to-date information regarding the products being sold, and encouraging consumers to interact on social media for business distributions, are proven capable of involving consumers to be involved in promotional and sales activities.

Distro business need to have a special division that manages social media so that the content provided can be more focused and routine for uploading on social media. Divisions or employees who specifically manage social media must be able to know the latest trends so they can stay in touch with consumers' wants and needs for distro products. Further researchers can use other objects for research. Tourism, electronic goods, beauty products, can be other objects used.

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