International Journal of Education, Information Technology and Others (IJEIT), January 2023, 6 (1), 1-9
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7556549
p-ISSN: 2654-2528 e-ISSN: 2623-2324
Accredited by Directorate General of Strengthening for Research and Development
Available online at https://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/IJEIT

Whatsapp Business As Customer Relationship Management Media
(Study of PT. Gramedia Customer's Loyalty During Covid-19 Pandemic)

Fitri Wahyu Rahmadania[1], Nurhidayat[2]

[1,2]Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi Profesi Indonesia

Received: 13 November 2022
Revised: 26 November 2022
Accepted: 7 December 2022

Abstract

The covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia which forced many businesses in every sector to close their operations temporarily as the government imposed social and physical distance regulations to stop the outbreak. At the beginning of the pandemic, many businesses were struggling to make ends meet since the stores had to be closed and the customers had to stay at home. PT. Gramedia was one of the businesses that face not only in terms of sales volume but also about how to maintain the customer's loyalty. By adopting whatsapp business as their customer relationship management media, the company could operate safely according to the health regulations which relate to the customer's transactions as well as maintain their loyalty. Whatsapp business has created an opportunity for the company to inform, engage and manage customer relationships without any limitations. The research aims to understand how to use whatsapp business as customer relationship management media in maintaining the customer's loyalty of PT. Gramedia during the covid-19 pandemic. With the features of this new media platform, the research could analyze how the company uses them in order to maintain the customer's loyalty. The research used the qualitative method by collecting data through in-depth-interviews, non-participant observations, and literature reviews which were associated with research object. The findings showed that how PT. Gramedia implements various customer relationship management strategies, especially utilizing features of whatsapp business to maintain the customer's loyalty during the covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *New Media, Customer Relationship Management, Whatsapp Business, Customer's Loyalty, Covid-19 Pandemic*

(*) Corresponding Author: rahmadania.fitri@stikomprosia.ac.id,nurhidayat1097@gmail.com

How to Cite: Rahmadania, F., & Nurhidayat, N. (2023). Whatsapp Business As Customer Relationship Management Media. *International Journal of Education, Information Technology, and Others*, *6*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7556549

INTRODUCTION

The unexpected corona virus 2019 pandemic that occurred across the world has impact the society and economic. Many businesses in Indonesia have been struggling to survive as the government imposed on regulations regarding health safety such as social and physical distancing (PSBB), public places have to be closed temporarily, wearing mask mandatory in public space, etc. With these restrictions cause some issues of business development such as falling in terms of sales volume, rising numbers of layoff, difficulty in financing the operational and maintaining the relationship with stakeholders. The outbreak has caused micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to earn lower incomes which force the

businesses operation unusual compare to the situation before pandemic. (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020).

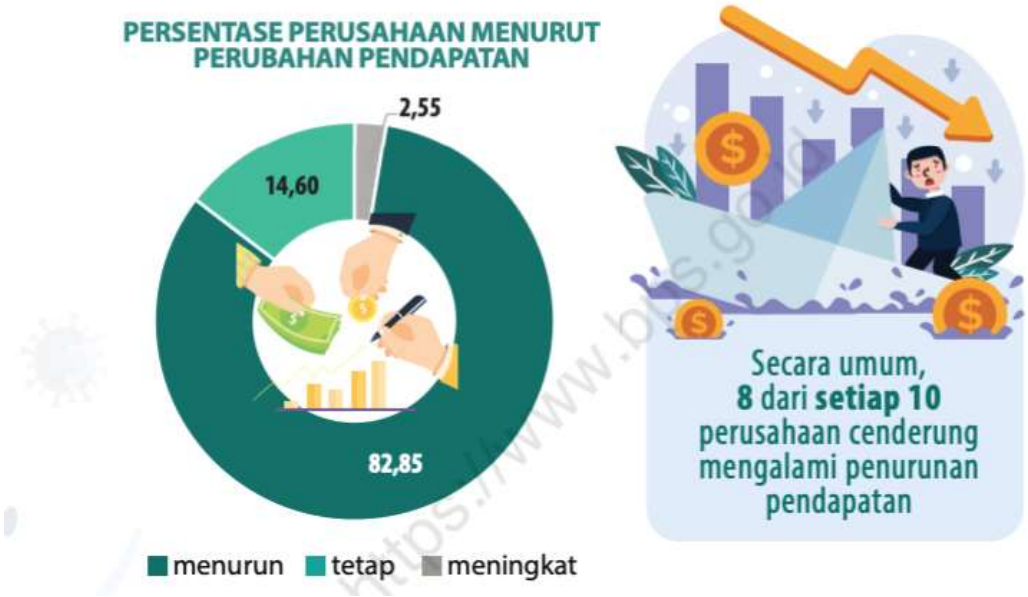

Figure 1. Percentile of Businesses Earn Lower Incomes During Pandemic (BPS, 2020)

The figure above showed that 82,85 % of MSMEs in Indonesia earned lower incomes due to covid-19 pandemic. As a solution some of businesses have to adapt the working habits to the 'New Normal' in order to control the outbreak. Another issue is how to manage the customer relationship with the company during the pandemic. It has immediate effect on customer loyalty since 75% of consumers tried new shopping behavior which allowed them to search brand that reflect their value (McKinsey, 2020). Customer relationship management define as a process of building and maintain the long-term relation between the company with the customer by providing excellence services and quick responses to satisfy their needs and wants (Kurniawan *et al.* (2061); Wahdian & Setiawati, 2020). There are five dimensions in CRM that need to be focused on such as information sharing, customer involvement, long-term partnership, joint problem solving, and technology-based (applications) engagement between the company with the customers (Rosmayani, 2016). By implementing CRM, the company could gain some benefits such as able to acquire new customers, able to enhance the customer value towards brand, and able to retain the customer loyalty by understanding and innovating the products or services that fitted to market.

By Adopting new media or internet-based platform became promising solution for businesses to reach both potential and existing customers. Based on the survey data, 27,45% Indonesian MSMEs in many sectors had start using internet and IT as their problem-solving strategy during the pandemic (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). Indonesia has been ranked as top 10 countries that actively using internet especially social media whatsapp which most used platform for various purposes such as communication, business, work and other activities (Stephanie,

2021). Whatsapp offers many features such as sharing text, photos, videos, audios, documents, links by using data network which differed to Whatsapp Messenger, Whatsapp Business and Whatsapp Business API that allowed users to engage with other users for both personal and business purpose. Some MSMEs used Whasapp business to connect with the customers in providing support and delivering information through direct respond messages. Whatsapp business help the company to communicate with the customers efficiently as some features supporting the businesses to gain profits and customer's loyalty such as business catalogue, customer cart, business profile, business label and automatic messages (Hendriyani *et al.*, 2020). By utilizing whatsapp business as a platform that could reach both potential and existing customer is one of solution which implemented by some of MSMEs in terms of selling products or services as well as maintaining the customer relationship management (CRM).

PT. Gramedia was one of the enterprises that utilizing whatsapp business as customer relationship media during the pandemic. The bookstore unable to operate normally due to the PSBB regulation which restricted the customers to visit the store. There are some issues such as difficulty to sell products, earn lower income, and difficulty in handling the customers which quite challenging at the beginning of outbreak. In order to tackle these issues, the company decided to utilize whatsapp business as part of the CRM program development which known as 'Layanan, Pesan, Bayar, Antar' that enable the company to provide excellence service, boost the sales volume as well as maintain the relationship with both potential and loyal customers. The reasons of choosing whatsapp business as the main platform are based on the customer's database it is one of the most used applications as the communication media, it could be access for free and its features allowed the company to deliver information, respond the customer's needs both products and services, handle the customer's complaint, etc. Based on that backroung, this study aims to understand how to use whatsapp business as customer relationship management media in maintaining the customer's loyalty of PT. Gramedia during the covid-19 pandemic. With its features, the research could analyze how the company uses them in order to provide excellence service to both potential and existing customers, boost the sales volume and maintain the customer's loyalty despite of the outbreak.

METHOD

In order to reach the aims of this study, the research used the qualitative descriptive approach by several methods such as collecting data through in-depth-interviews, non-participant observations, and literature reviews. Qualitative is a research method that described and interpreted the research object based on the fact which gathered from the informant's words and behavior observation who really know about the object (Djaelani, 2013; Sugiyono, 2016). Selecting the right informants is very important in order to get depth knowledge and information related to the object as well as to complete the analysis from different perspectives (Sugiyono, 2016, Heryana, 2018).

Data collection was obtained by conducting in-depth-interviews with several type of questions such as general and specific detailed that related to the object, concepts and theories of this research as well as non-participant obeservations. This research also uses literature reviews and documentations as data support for analyzing and comparing the findings with the concepts and theories. In qualitative research, data reduction, data display and data verification are the process of analyzing data that could describe or interpret the research findings that collected from different method and show how the data being validated (Ghony *et al.*, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of covid-19 pandemic, PT Gramedia has to close the stores temporarily due to PSBB regulations which no customers allowed within the area that impacted on the sales volume and handling the customer services. Few strategies were implemented such as limit the numbers of customer visit the stores, drive thru services and others which led to a problem with municipal police (Satpol PP) who responsible to monitor the social and physical distance regulation in the public area. Hence, PT. Gramedia decided to adopt the new media like other MSMEs in Indonesia in order to be able to reach as well as maintain relationship both potential and existing customers. PT. Gramedia stated that CRM is important for strategy development, value creation, multi-channel integration, information management, and performance assessment process which has implemented before the pandemic. CRM helped the company to understand who the customers are and what products that customers like so it could develop strategy that improve the services as well as satisfy the customer's needs and wants. By collecting the customer database manually from the events such as talk show or book launching. Then the staff need to fill database forms which included the customer information like name, whatsapp number, type of books interest and buying patterns which shown in the Figure 2 below.

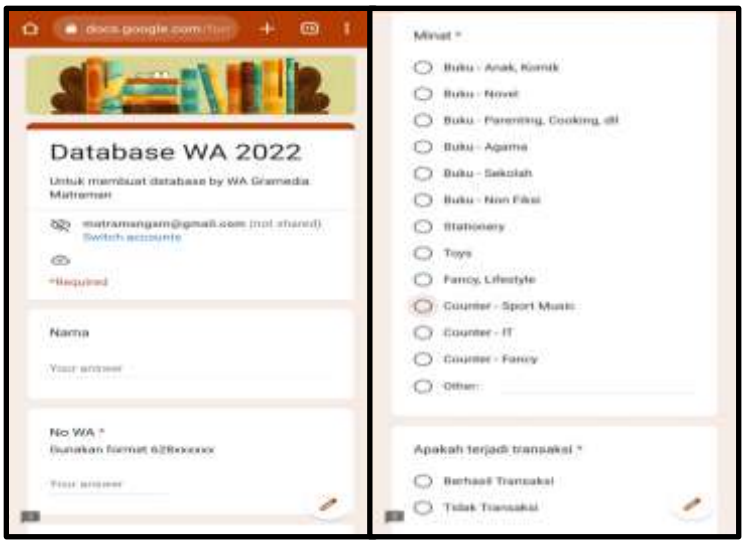

Figure 2. PT. Gramedia's CRM Analytic Form

With the database that collected before, PT. Gramedia utilized the whatsapp business as CRM media to reach the customers and developed the program known as 'Layan, Pesan, Bayar Antar' to satisfy the customers. As stated in the introduction, CRM usually implemented with technology, whatsapp business has classified as computer mediated communication (CMC) that connects among users to exchange interactive information without any limitations like time, distance, and space (Pratiwi, 2014; Iriantara, 2019). The features of whatsapp business gave opportunity for PT. Gramedia to provide excellence service, boost the sales volume as well as maintain the relationship with both potential and loyal customers. There are 5 features that being utilized such as business profile, business label, business catalogue, customer cart, and automatic messages.

Figure 3. PT. Gramedia's Whatsapp Business Profile

Figure 3. showed that PT. Gramedia has created whatsapp business profile to inform the customers about the store description which included the updated operational hours, telephone number, address, MyValue apps and others during the pandemic. The company also utilized the business label to organize the message into symbols and colors that identify the services needed by customers. By organizing the purpose of customers help the staff to respond efficiently and effectively as it covered all activities such as pre-order, promotion events, best sellers, CSR program and delivery services provided which shown in the Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. PT. Gramedia's Whatsapp Business Label

PT. Gramedia also created the business catalogue to help the customer to find information about the updated product availability which enable them to shop online conveniently. Business catalogue displayed the books that being offered based on the category or best-seller as well as promotion for the customers. PT. Gramedia stated that the business catalogue usually updated every week depends on the availability, best-seller, and promotion which shown in the Figure 5. below.

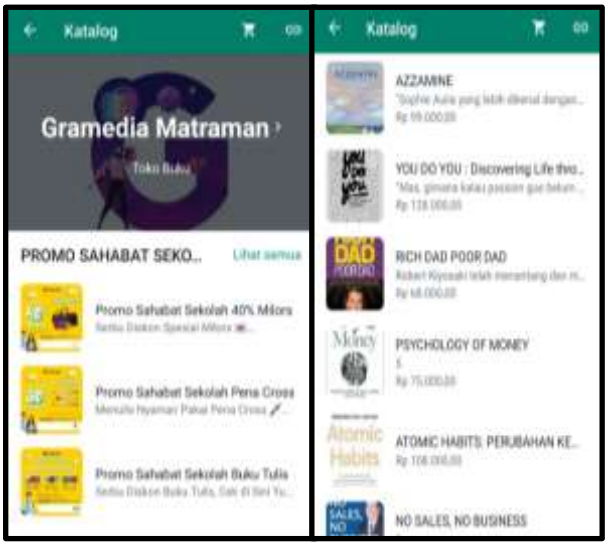

Figure 5. PT. Gramedia's Whatsapp Business Catalogue

The customer cart also a feature that allowed customers to order and paid virtually without visiting the store. It also helps the customers to verify the items description and to check the prices before processing the transaction payment. From business catalogue the customer able to send message to PT. Gramedia staff about product inquiries which easy to access. This feature show how effective and

efficient for customer to purchase any products or services that they need which shown in Figure 6. below.

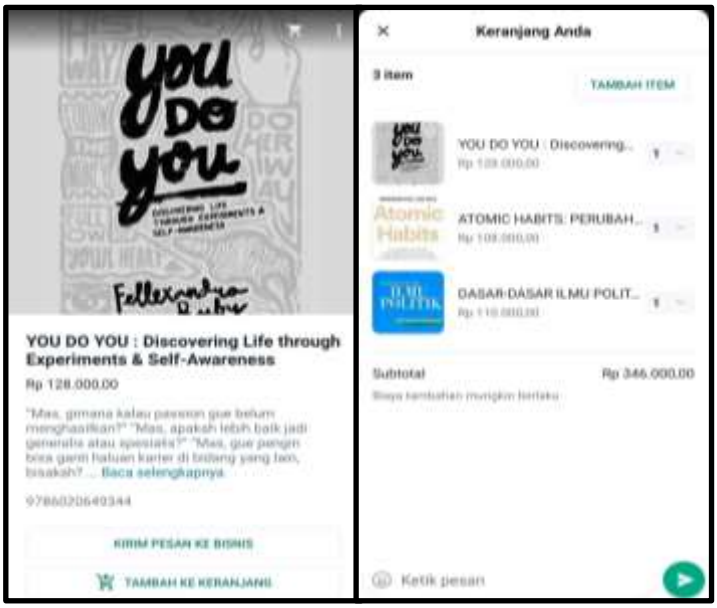

Figure 6. PT. Gramedia's Whatsapp Customer Cart

The last feature is automatic message that operate 24/7 by the bot so the customers could chat anytime they would like. PT. Gramedia has certain format and SOP for responding the customer's chat within 15 minutes during operational hours. Based on the chat the customers will be assist according to their needs such as product information, promotion program, and customer supports. PT. Gramedia also utilized this feature to inform the existing customers about the new product or promotion by broadcasting the message which shown in Figure 7. below.

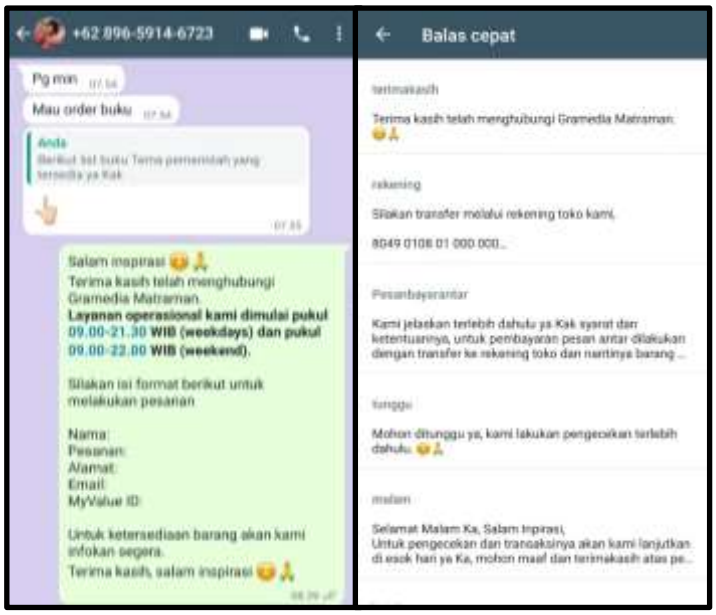

Figure 7. PT. Gramedia's Whatsapp Automatic Message

These whatsapp business features that being impelemented by PT. Gramedia as customer relationship management has brought some benefits for maintain the customer loyalty. By utilizing whatsapp business the company able to acquire new customer and existing customer during the covid-19 pandemic. Automatic message broadcast reaches the customer about the product availability, promotion and virtual events that held by the company. As the message reach to the customers, whatsapp business also enhanced the customer value by knowing the intensity of customer transaction from promotion program, up-selling or cross-selling that could increase the customer engagement. Lastly, retaining the customer loyalty is much easier with the help of whatsapp business since the company could assess the performance and analyze the customer habits.

CONCLUSION

The utilization of whatsapp business as customer relationship management media during the covid-19 pandemic that being implemented by PT. Gramedia has contributed to customer's loyalty maintenance. There are 5 features that being used such as business profile, business label, business catalogue, consumer cart, and automatic messages which gain some benefits for PT. Gramedia. The company able to acquire customer, enhance the customer value and retain the customer loyalty during the pandemic.

PT. Gramedia showed that by intergrating the customer relationship management into new media platform, whatsapp business, has enable them to maintain the customer's loyalty and survive in the difficult period. This research also showed that PT. Gramedia could improve by developing and adjusting other CRM program that could generate more loyal customers and contribute to business sustainable growth in the future, especially post covid-19 pandemic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all parties involved in this research: Head of the communication science college Profesi Indonesia, Public Relations Manager of PT. Gramedia and the customers of PT. Gramedia who has contributed their supports.

REFERENCES

Badan Pusat Statistik (2020). Analisis Hasil Survei Dampak Covid-19 Terhdapa Pelaku Usaha.https://www.bps.go.id/publication/2020/09/15/9efe2fbda7d674c09ffd0978/analisis-hasil-survei-dampak-covid-19-terhadap-pelaku-usaha.html

Djaelani, A. R. (2013). Teknik Pengumpulan Data Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif. Majalah Ilmiah Pawiyatan 20(1), pp. 82-92.

Ghony, M. D, Wahyuni, S. & Almanshur, F. (2020). Analisis dan Interpretasi Data Penelitian Kualitatif. Bandung: Refika Aditama

Hendriyani, C. Dwianti, S. P., Herawaty, T. & Ruslan, B. (2020). Analysis of Whatsapp Business Usage in Encouraging Sales and Customer Enggagement at PT. Saung Angklung Udjo. AdBispreneur: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Penelitian Administrasi Bisnis dan Kewirausahaan 5(2), pp. 193-200.

Heryana, A. (2018). Informan dan Pemilihan Informan dalam Penelitian Kualitatif. Kesehatan Masyarakat, pp. 1-14.

Iriantara, Y. (2019). Media Relations: Konsep, Pendekatan, dan Praktik Edisi Revisi. Bandung: Simbiosa Rekatama Media

Kurniawan, I., Wahyuddin, A., & Nurhayati, Y. (2016). Implementasi Customer Relationship Management Pada Penjualan Di Koperasi Mawar Garawangi. Sistem Informasi, pp. 1-9

McKinsey & Company (2020). Emerging Consumer Trends in a Post Covid 19 World. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/emerging-consumer-trends-in-a-post-covid-19-world

Pratiwi, F. D. (2014) Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) dalam Perspektif Komunikasi Lintas Budaya. Ilmu Komunikasi 7 (1), pp. 29-44.

Rosmayani (2016). Customer Relationship Management. Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik 2 (1), pp. 83-98

Stephanie (2021). Berapa Lama Orang Indonesia Akses Internet dan Medsos Setiap Hari. https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2021/02/23/11320087/berapa-lama-orang-indonesia-akses-internet-dan-medsos-setiap-hari?page=all#page2

Sugiyono. (2016). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D. Bandung: Alfabeta

Wahdian & Setiawati, S. D. (2020). Customer Relationship Management PT. Samsung Electronics Indonesia Di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19 di Indonesia. LINIMASA: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi 3(2), pp. 55-66.