

Sponsored Content on Instagram as an Effort to Increase Promotional Effectiveness in Digital Advertising: A Systematic Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media use in Indonesia, especially Instagram, has transformed digital advertising strategies, with sponsored content emerging as a key promotional tool. Sponsored content, often delivered by influencers via stories and feeds, is perceived as more authentic and engaging compared to conventional brand ads. However, concerns about the transparency and ethical disclosure of sponsored content persist, affecting consumer trust and regulatory practices. This study aims to systematically review the effectiveness and characteristics of sponsored content on Instagram as a promotional medium in digital advertising, focusing on both global insights and implications for Indonesia. A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted, analyzing 19 journal articles published between 2019 and 2023 sourced from databases including Scopus, Google Scholar, Sage Journals, and Taylor & Francis. The review applied PRISMA guidelines for identification, screening, and inclusion of relevant studies. Findings reveal that influencer-sponsored content on Instagram enhances brand awareness, consumer engagement, and purchase intent more effectively than traditional ads. Disclosure of sponsorship is crucial to prevent audience confusion and build trust, with regulations established in regions like Europe and America. Nonetheless, limited research addresses the Indonesian context, indicating a gap in understanding local practices and regulatory frameworks. This review highlights the need for future research exploring sponsored content within Indonesia's digital advertising landscape and calls for the development of clear consumer protection policies to ensure transparency and ethical promotion on social media platforms..

Keywords: digital advertising, sponsored content, social media, Instagram

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INTRODUCTION

The use of social media in Indonesia has increased rapidly in recent years. According to the We Are Social and Hootsuite report in 2021, internet users in Indonesia reached 202 million, or around 73% of the total population, and more than 160 million of them use social media. Antonius Teguh Prayogo and Fajar Junaedi (2018) in the article Social Media Use in Indonesia: A National Survey it was found that the use of social media in Indonesia is mainly dominated by Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. More than 90% of respondents in the study access Facebook and WhatsApp, while more than 80% of respondents access Instagram.

However, even though the use of social media in Indonesia is increasing, there are still challenges in using it effectively. According to the Social Media Trends in Indonesia: Opportunities and Challenges for Brands (2020) report, the biggest challenge is reaching the right audience and obtaining effective use of social media platforms. Digital advertising on social media has become one of the most effective marketing tools in today's digital era. Ladan Nikaein et al., (2018) discuss a number of factors that affect the effectiveness of social media advertising, including: first, social media advertising has the ability to reach highly segmented audiences, so that brands and companies can market their products more effectively to the right target market; Second, social media ads can be accurately measured and tracked, allowing brands and companies to measure the success of their campaigns and improve future marketing strategies.

Nitish Singh and Ashish Kumar (2018) discuss the impact of social media advertising on consumer purchasing behavior and explain that social media advertising can influence

consumer purchases by increasing brand awareness, improving brand perception, and directing consumers to purchase actions. However, it's worth noting that too many irrelevant or intrusive social media ads can reduce the effectiveness of an ad campaign and even lead to a decrease in consumer loyalty to the brand. Therefore, companies and brands need to consider the frequency and context of their ads to ensure that their ads are delivered effectively and do not interfere with the user experience on social media.

Sponsored content, also known as native advertising, is a form of advertising that is presented in a more organic format of editorial content and can be easily integrated into the editorial environment. According to a study by the IAB (2013), 85% of readers admitted that they could not distinguish between editorial content and sponsored content, thus making sponsored content an effective choice for marketers. However, there is some debate among marketers, media practitioners, and consumers about the effectiveness and ethics of sponsored content. Some critics argue that sponsored content can cause confusion and mislead consumers, reduce trust in the brand or media that publishes it, and even compromise journalistic integrity.

Jennifer Edson Escalas and James R. Bettman (2015) show that sponsored content can increase brand awareness and consumer trust in brands if presented in a relevant and transparent manner. However, it is important for brands and publishers to ensure that sponsored content is clearly identified and separated from editorial content, as well as to provide consumers with adequate information about the origin, sponsorship, and purpose of the advertisement. A study by Saeed Khanagha and Farhad Moeeni (2020) also found that transparency and relevance are key factors for the success of sponsored content. They recommend that marketers consider their marketing goals, target audience, and the publisher's editorial policies before making a decision to adopt sponsored content.

In Indonesia itself, the practice of using sponsored content as a promotion in digital advertising has been widely practiced by both celebrities and influencers. However, there have not been many journal articles that have researched this matter, although it is very important to know how to practice and effectively use sponsored content as a promotional tool for digital advertising on social media. Considering that the use of sponsored content is a form of promotion of the digital advertising era on social media, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of the use of sponsored content as a promotional effort in digital advertising on social media, especially Instagram, with the systematic literature review (SLR) method. This study discusses these two topics through the following research questions: (a) How to apply sponsored content as a promotional medium in the digital advertising era? (b) How effective is the concept of sponsored content on Instagram social media as one of the promotional efforts in the digital advertising era?

METHOD

In order to determine the effectiveness of sponsored content on Instagram social media for promotion in digital advertising, the systematic literature review method is used, which is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method to identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous research from researchers, scholars, and practitioners (Fink, 2005; (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2016). The guideline used in the systematic literature review is the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) to assess the feasibility of journals whose findings can be measured by conducting identification, screening, feasibility assessment, and inclusion stages.

The data used is from an international academic journal in English, based on findings from the internet. According to the initial stage in PRISMA, the identification carried out is to determine and mark the keywords of sponsored content on search engines, which are then

sorted to find journal articles that are appropriate and relevant to the needs of this study. The keywords used are digital advertising, sponsored content, social media, and Instagram.

Data collection was used online through Scopus, Google Scholar, Sage Journals, and Taylor & Francis Online, using the main keywords digital advertising, sponsored content, social media, and Instagram for academic journals published in the 2019 - 2023 period. From the results of searching academic journals according to the main keywords, 25 journal articles were obtained. The journal article was then thoroughly researched based on the title, abstract, research results, and discussion, to determine whether the journal article was related to the objective regarding the use of sponsored content in the context of digital advertising on social media. After conducting a feasibility assessment process with the keywords digital advertising, sponsored content, social media, and Instagram, 6 journal articles were found that were not relevant to the research context. At the end of the screening process, there were 19 journal articles that became the final analysis material in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the journal search through a systematic literature review were then grouped into several categories, namely the category of the year of publication of the article, the category of the location of the research country, the category of the discipline, the category of research method, the category of concept and the results of the research. By grouping the research results from the 19 selected journal articles (Table 1) into several categories of results, it can be known that the general pattern of sponsored content on Instagram social media is an effort to increase the effectiveness of promotion in digital advertising.

Table 1. The 19 Selected Journal Articles

No.	Journal	Keyword	Concept	Metode
1.	#Vape: Measuring E-Cigarette Influence on Instagram With Deep Learning and Text Analysis Julia Vassey, Catherine Metayer, Chris J. Kennedy, and Todd P. Whitehead (2020)	vape; vaping; e-cigarettes; social media; Instagram; deep learning; images	social media	Mixed method
2.	Differences between Instagram and Facebook Sponsored Posts for Small Hospitality Businesses Čuić Tanković, Ana; Perišić Prodan, Marina; Tomljanović, Doris (2022)	social networks; marketing communication; advertising	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative
3.	A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Disclosing Sponsored Content Martin Eisend, Eva A. van Reijmersdal, Sophie C. Boerman & Farid Tarrahi (2020)	Sponsored content, Priming Effect, meta-analysis	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative
4.	Characterizing and Detecting Sponsored Influencer Posts on Instagram	Influencers; Instagram; Media; User Behavior Analysis;	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative

	Koosha Zarei, Damilola Ibosiolay, Reza Farahbakhsh, Zafar Gilaniy, Kiran Garimellaz, No'el Crespi, Gareth Tyson (2020)	Sponsored Content			
5.	Characterizing Content in Facebook and Instagram	Sponsored	Social network analysis, sponsored content, influencer marketing, Instagram, Facebook.	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative
6.	Digital advertising: present and future prospects		Digital advertising, social media	social media, digital advertising	Qualitative
7.	Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing vs Social Media Sponsored Advertising		Brand loyalty, brand perception, buying intention, influencer marketing, sponsored ads	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative
8.	Influencer Marketing on Instagram: Empirical Research on Social Media Engagement with Sponsored Posts		Field data, influencer advertising, Instagram, social media analytics, social media influencers	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative
9.	Influencer marketing on Instagram: How sponsorship disclosure, influencer credibility, and brand credibility impact the effectiveness of Instagram promotional posts		Influencer marketing; Instagram; sponsorship disclosure; persuasion knowledge; influencer credibility; brand credibility	social media	Quantitative
10.	Instafamous and social media influencer marketing		Brand management, Instagram, Social media marketing, Celebrity endorsements, Social presence, Luxury branding, Instafamous	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative
11.	Investigating Engagement with Influencer- vs.	Consumer	Influencer marketing, analysis,	sponsored content, social media	Quantitative

	Brand-Promoted Ads: The Roles of Source and Disclosure	The consumer engagement, consumer sentiment, topic modelling			
	Chen Lou, Sang-Sang Tan & Xiaoyu Chen (2019)				
12.	Keeping up with influencers: exploring the impact of social presence and parasocial interactions on Instagram	Influencer marketing, persuasion knowledge model, social presence, parasocial interaction, self-efficacy	sponsored content, social media		Quantitative
	Hyosun Kim (2021)				
13.	Living in a Material World: Sponsored Instagram Posts and the Role of Materialism, Hedonic Enjoyment, Perceived Trust, and Need to Belong	sponsored content engagement, materialism, hedonic enjoyment, influencer trust, need to belong	sponsored brand content		Quantitative
	Eunjin (Anna) Kim, Heather Shoenberger, and Yuan Sun (2021)				
14.	Commercial Limits to Personality: Instagram Influencers and Commoditized Content Receptivity	Instagram; influencer; social media; identity	Instagram, sponsored content		Quantitative
	Tyler Horan (2021)				
15.	The disclosure paradox: how persuasion knowledge mediates disclosure effects in sponsored media content	Persuasion knowledge; disclosure; sponsored content; persuasion; advertising	sponsored content, advertising		Quantitative
	Johannes Beckert, Thomas Koch, Benno Viererbl & Charlotte Schulz-Knappe (2021)				
16.	The Effects of CSR Appeals and Message Sources Consumer Responses to Branded Content on Instagram	CSR appeals: persuasion knowledge; purchase intent; social media influencers; word of mouth	social media, sponsored content		Quantitative
	Yangzhi (Nicole) Jiang & Hyojung Park (2021)				
17.	The Effects of Influencer Types and Sponsorship Disclosure in Instagram Sponsored Posts	<i>*Keywords are not written specifically in the abstract section</i>	sponsored content, Instagram		Quantitative
	Y. J. Chung, S. S. Lee & E. Kim (2023)				

18.	Understanding which cues people use to identify influencer marketing on Instagram: an eye-tracking study and experiment Sophie C. Boerman & Céline M. Müller (2021)	Influencer marketing; social media marketing; persuasion knowledge; eye tracking; disclosure; Instagram; influencer type	Instagram	Quantitative
19.	Visual Attention to the Use of #ad versus #sponsored on e-Cigarette Influencer Posts on Social Media: A Randomized Experiment Elizabeth G. Klein, Lauren Czaplicki, Micah Berman, Sherry Emery, Barbara Schillo (2020)	<i>*Keywords are not written specifically in the abstract section</i>	Instagram, sponsored content	Quantitative

Category: Year of Publication of the Article

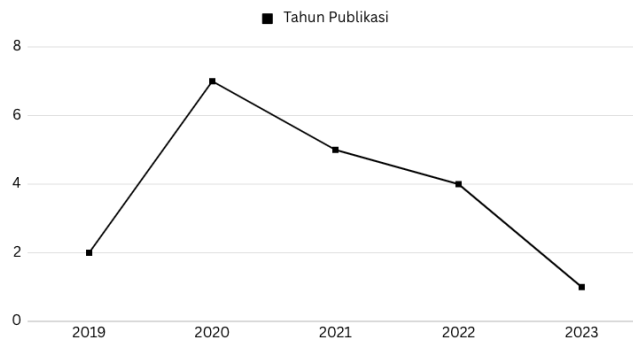


Figure 2. Category Chart of Year of Publication of the Article

In the category of year of publication of articles, it can be seen that the most published number of articles is in 2020, which is 7 articles or 36.8% of the total number of journals selected. After 2020, the next highest number is in 2021, which is 5 articles or 26.3%. Followed by 2022 as many as 4 journals or 21%, 2019 as many as 2 journals or 10.5%, and 2023 as many as 1 journal or 5.2%.

Category Location of the Research Country

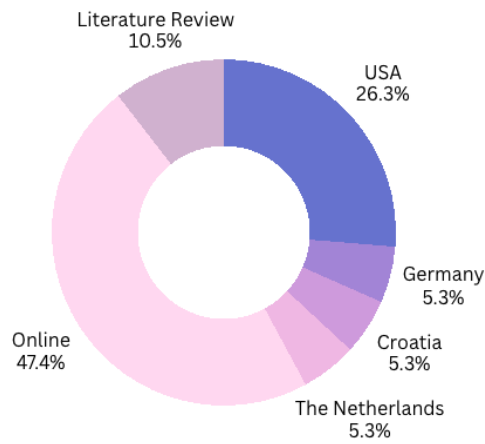


Figure 3. Chart of Category Locations of Research Countries

In the category of location of the research country, most of the research was conducted online, with 9 journals or 47.4%. Then, for the most research locations, the United States has 5 journals or 26.3%. Then followed by research using literature review, as many as 2 journals or 10.5%. And Germany, Croatia, and the Netherlands, with 1 journal each, or 5.3%.

Categories of Disciplines

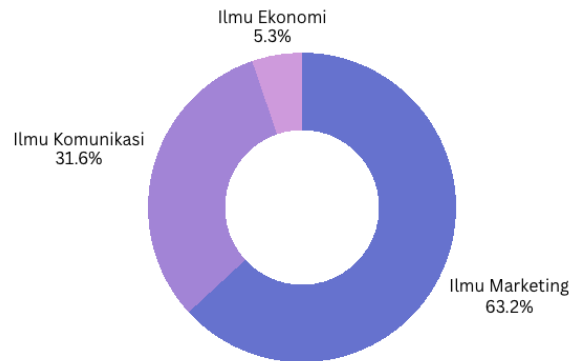


Figure 4. Discipline Category Diagram

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Research Method Categories

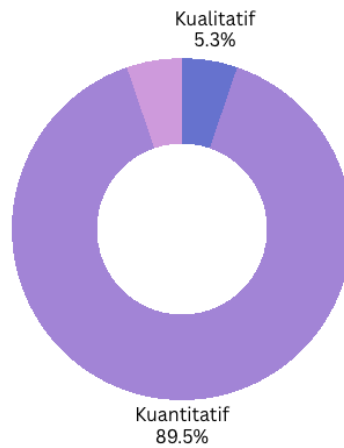


Figure 5. Research Method Category Diagram

In the discipline category, the highest number of journals is in the discipline of marketing (marketing) with 12 journals or 63.2%. Then there is the discipline of communication science with 6 journals or 31.6%. Then there are journals from economics, as many as 1 journal or 5.3%.

Research Concept Categories

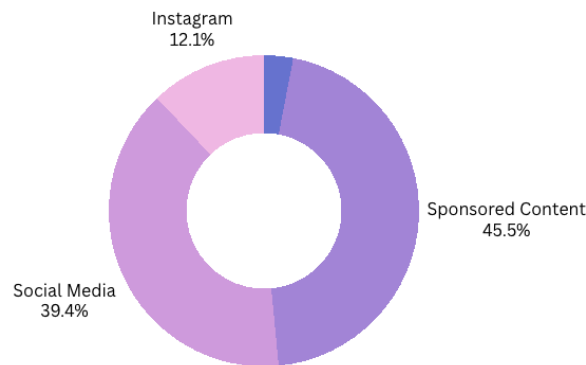


Figure 3. Research Concept Category Diagram

In the research concept category, the most widely used research concept is the concept of sponsored content, with 15 journals or 45.5%. And followed by the use of the concept of social media with 13 journals or 39.4%. Then the use of the Instagram concept with 4 journals or 12.1%. And the concept of digital advertising with 1 journal or 3%.

Discussion

From the results of the journal's findings, it can be seen that the rapid changes in the media landscape brought about by digital transformation have blurred the boundaries between and domains of various advertising media (H. Lee & Cho, 2019). The number of digital media adopters has increased mainly due to the increasing use of the internet and mobile phones (Truong, McColl, and Kitchen, 2010). The ubiquitous use of mobile-based communication creates new opportunities for advertisers to advertise, build consumer relationships, and receive responses directly from consumers (Andrews et al., 2016). For example, the mode of transmission of advertising messages has shifted to mobile devices, and messages reach

consumers directly without having to be delivered through traditional channels, thus allowing consumers to respond directly (J. A. Lee et al., 2022).

Lee and Cho (2019) propose that 'digital advertising' refers to communication regarding products, services, or ideas through digital media, which includes not only traditional online media (internet), but also interactive media such as digital signage, smartphones, or virtual reality platforms. Furthermore, Rodgers and Thorson (2018) define 'digital advertising' as various forms of branded content in a digital context, including branded content that appears in the context of social media, messages from companies in the form of blogs, tweets, Facebook posts, and comments that consumers make about brands (Santoso et al., 2020).

Companies used social media micro-influencers and digital advertising targeted at smaller segments of consumers in hopes of a greater response to more rigorously designed campaigns (Goncalves et al., 2016). For this reason, spending on digital advertising, in particular, social media advertising, is growing rapidly (Valos et al., 2017).

The processing of digital advertising may differ from traditional media because consumers perceive social media, in particular, as a semi-private space; branded messages on social media can be perceived as intrusive and annoying (Goncalves et al., 2016). Other dynamics in online consumer behavior, such as shifting attention from one device to another (Segijn, Voorveld, Vandeberg, et al., 2017) and the use of ad-blocking software (Tudoran, 2019), give consumers additional power to select, process, or ignore branded messages (Santoso et al., 2020).

Instagram is one of the popular social media platforms for digital advertising activities. As a platform that has over a billion active users worldwide, Instagram offers a wide range of possibilities for businesses to reach audiences and promote their products or services. Based on the quote from Lou et al. (2019) about Instagram's potential in higher engagement for brands, for a brand and entity, interaction from followers can be feedback to decide what kind of content gets the most engagement.

Instagram can also increase consumer trust in your brand, as well as help increase intent to buy a product or service that is being promoted. This is especially true for consumers who have a preference to buy products they see on social media (Chen, 2018; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Johnson, Potocki, and Veldhuis, 2019; Van Dam & Van Reijmersdal, 2019). This is especially true for consumers who have a preference to buy products they see on social media. Companies use social media micro-influencers and digital advertising targeted at smaller segments of consumers in hopes of a greater response to more rigorously designed campaigns (Goncalves et al., 2016). For this reason, spending on digital advertising, in particular, social media advertising, is growing rapidly (Valos et al., 2017).

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In general, sponsored content is used by influencers on social media. Influencers, whether mega, macro, or micro, usually use the stories feature in Instagram to promote sponsored content compared to the post feature. This is possible considering that using stories is more economical than using feeds. Another reason is exclusivity, where followers must remain visible and must rush to see offers or discount codes, and so on, that are given as long as the story is still there (Zarei et al., 2020).

Kim (2021) in his research results, stated that from a consumer perspective, they are more likely to be psychologically connected to influencers and can see sponsored content better and consider it as a lifestyle to emulate. It also shows that a high social presence in Instagram posts strengthens parasocial interaction and makes sponsored content seem more authentic and less "promotional".

Sponsored posts or Ads on social media allow advertisers to create promotional messages that are displayed on the timelines of their target audience or customers. Social media advertising itself has been proven to be effective in increasing sales and creating awareness (Jarrar et al., 2020). Boeran and van Reijmersdal (2016, in (Eisend et al., 2020) mentioned that the disclosure of sponsored content can affect several variables. Disclosure of sponsored content can enable persuasive knowledge but reduce brand attitudes and purchase intent. Eisend et al. (2020) in their research also revealed that the disclosure of sponsored content even though it reduces the evaluation of brands, is still effective and necessary to increase persuasive knowledge. The introduction of sponsored content by social media audiences has a strong effect on cognition, especially the priming effect. This will also increase brand memory.

The same thing is also agreed by Tancovic et al. (2022), citing Belanche et al. (2019), showing that sponsored content on social networks increases marketers' income by providing value or satisfaction to consumers (Sheiner et al., 2021) by embedding ads in the feeds of social media users, where engagement is at the highest level (Plume et al., 2018). Labeling commercially sponsored content in social media is also a good strategy to attract the attention of adolescents and young adults (Klein et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the practice of covert sponsored content (without providing information that the upload is sponsored) sometimes confuses social media users. Consumers may feel deceived by sponsored content and make inappropriate purchasing decisions. Therefore, in order to protect customers, disclosure of sponsorship information on social media is required by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) (Petty and Andrews 2008, (Jiang & Park, 2021). For example, influencers on social media are required to add hashtags such as "#sponsored" in sponsored posts to distinguish sponsored content from personal posts (Chung et al., 2023; Jiang & Park, 2021).

In addition, some parties in Europe and the United States are developing regulations and laws regarding the disclosure of the persuasive or commercial nature of sponsored content to improve media transparency (e.g., FTC 2015; Social Code 2017; WOMMA 2017). This disclosure is in the form of text or pictograms that accompany sponsored content, which are used to inform audiences about the commercial or persuasive nature of the content (Cain 2011, (Eisend et al., 2020). It can also have a positive influence on the perception of followers' credibility towards sponsored posts and influencers, thereby reducing the negative impact of ad recognition (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) analyzed 19 journal articles focusing on digital advertising, sponsored content, social media, and Instagram. The findings reveal that sponsored content on Instagram is commonly used by influencers through stories and feeds as a subtle and embedded form of digital advertising. Compared to traditional brand ads, influencer-sponsored content is perceived as more authentic, organic, and directly engaging with potential consumers. This type of content tends to generate higher engagement and more positive audience sentiment, contributing effectively to increased brand awareness and sales. An important concern highlighted is the disclosure of sponsored content to prevent audience confusion. Proper disclosure positively impacts brand trust, engagement, and consumer knowledge while protecting consumers by clearly distinguishing promotional content from personal posts. Regulations on disclosure exist in regions like Europe and America, but there is limited research on how these practices are applied or regulated in Indonesia. Given the scarcity of Indonesian-focused studies, future research is needed to explore sponsored content as a digital advertising tool within the Indonesian Instagram context. Additionally, there is a need to investigate and develop consumer protection regulations concerning sponsored content in Indonesia to ensure transparent and ethical advertising practices on social media platforms.

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