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Social Themed Post LinkedIn Can Affect Engagement Rate as Social Media Professional Platform For Business to Business (B2B)

Agnesia Indah Sukma[1]

Yasaldo Gigih Nugroho[1]

Jerry S. Justianto[2]

[1]Magister Management Student,
Binus Business School,
Indonesia
[2]Faculty Member,
Binus Business School,
Indonesia

Abstract

This research investigates the influence of social theme-oriented content on the LinkedIn platform on business-to-business (B2B) enterprise in Indonesia. The unit of analysis in this study is a B2B corporation located in Indonesia. The research methodology employed is a quantitative approach, specifically utilizing secondary data analysis. The findings of the study indicate that posts centered around social themes had a statistically significant and favorable effect on the number of followers a company gained on LinkedIn. However, it is noteworthy that these posts did not exhibit a statistically significant impact on levels of engagement and impressions. The limited influence of social theme-based postings on user engagement and impressions could potentially be attributed to users' inclination towards more professional material and the presence of competing content in the same thematic category. Additional factors, such as the timing of posts, the underlying objectives, and the maintenance of brand coherence, also exert a significant influence. Hence, it can be argued that LinkedIn postings centered around social themes primarily contribute to the growth number of followers, rather than enhancing engagement and impressions. This study offers valuable insights into the utilization of the LinkedIn platform by B2B enterprises for the purpose of cultivating a number of followings. It highlights the significance of developing a content strategy that aligns with the preferences of the target audience and the unique qualities of the platform.

Keyword: LinkedIn, Social Media Business to Business, Engagement Rate, Social Media Content, Number of Followers

1. Introduction

Business-to-business is a common company in Indonesia. According to data from Badan Pusat Statistic (2021), there will be approximately 29 thousand medium and large-scale businesses or companies in 2022. Because of their large numbers, they can compete to be the best with their

competitive advantage. In the era of globalization, business competition is becoming more and more intense, and business owners and entrepreneurs need to take strategic steps to ensure business sustainability (Agustin et al., 2021). Business-to-business (B2B) businesses continue to grow in their use of social media due to relatively low deployment costs, supported sales efforts, and increased use of social media by buyers in purchasing (Cortez et al., 2023). In early 2022, approximately 62.5% of the global population, equivalent to 4.95 billion individuals, were internet users, with 4.62 billion of them actively engaging with social media platforms. However, keep in mind that not all social media "users" are separate individuals (Kemp, 2022). It will help businesses gain more advantages if they understand how to manage their social media. When a post strikes a chord with the intended audience, managers (customers) may react by liking, clicking, sharing, and commenting. As a result, the message content is essential for increasing interaction and reaching a larger audience, resulting in a greater number of followers and business sales (Prodromou, 2015).

Improving performance outcomes through a professional networking platform is crucial for individuals, businesses, and organizations to achieve their goals and objectives. Although it may be possible to use digital media to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing-related activities, there currently needs to be a complete framework for choosing, utilizing, and integrating pertinent digital media in industrial marketing for enhanced performance results (Krings et al., 2021). However, in Indonesia, companies are less knowledgeable about the effect of using professional networking platforms as their business-to-business social media. Previous studies by (Leek et al., 2019) mentioned social media channels such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+; however, the research model was limited to Twitter. As to this, understanding how to engage those platforms effectively requires further research. In the Cortez 2023 research, Limitation explained that it would be good if research on post types had an impact on engagement rate, number of followers, and web visits carried out in Asia so that they could see the differences between the continents. LinkedIn is one of the network platforms designed for professional networks, making it easier for people to connect. It also has a robust job search that allows job seekers to receive recommendations based on their skills. In Indonesia, there is no study on whether social-themed posts on LinkedIn can directly affect engagement or must go through impressions or new followers as mediation. Therefore, this research aims to discover social-themed posts that affect engagement in B2B companies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media in Business-to-Business

Social media began in 2003 with the emergence of platforms for sharing content on a peer-to-peer basis (Sponder and Khan, 2017). The existing social media is very varied; when surfing the Internet, there are several social media such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, and many more. Most people use social media, and many have at least one account. They often become marketing targets because users represent nearly every age, demographic, political, religious, interest, psychographic, and income bracket (Sponder and Khan, 2017). Social media allows content that tells stories, evokes emotions, and sparks conversation. In general, the dynamic nature of social media enables B2B businesses to strengthen the social component of selling goods and services to customers and employees (Cortez et al., 2023). Social Engagement Theory highlights the role of social interactions in creating bonds between users, such as liking, commenting, and sharing content, which in turn can influence the extent to which users engage in content shared on the platform (Ellison et al., 2007). Social Engagement Theory is used in this research to describe how social interactions that occur on the LinkedIn platform, especially in a business-to-business (B2B) environment, have the potential to influence the level of user engagement with social-themed posts.

2.2 LinkedIn as a Professional Platform

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, with more than 900 million users spread across 200 territories. This platform seeks to unite professionals everywhere to increase productivity and performance and offers opportunities to work with great activists wherever they are (LinkedIn, 2023). With 40% of users connecting daily on the platform, a major part of the population on LinkedIn is men between 25 and 34 years old. The goals of this platform are (1) to do commercial prospecting and develop the network; (2) to develop personal branding and employee advocacy; (3) to promote the activity and show the expertise; (3) to increase the visibility of the company; (4) to share the life of the company and put the employee in the spotlight; and (5) to monitor the media and the competition (Social Media Guide, 2022). With an 89% penetration rate, LinkedIn is the most popular social networking site for business-to-business (B2B) companies. Its popularity stems from its ability to identify decision-makers and buyers, provide a good prospect, create relationships between customers, and have a good reputation among B2B marketers (Cortez et al., 2023).

2.2.1 Social Media Content

According to earlier studies, the relevance of a post's content (as opposed to its irrelevance) affects how effective social media is (Bill et al., 2020). Previous studies identified three types of LinkedIn posts: social type, technical type, and sales type (Cortez et al., 2023). Social media posts show the human side of the business experience (i.e., people are the main image) and communicate a good image, such as field trips, greetings on a special occasion, management recognition, and interactions with coworkers and/or customers. Social posts are anticipated to impact sales by providing emotional value to customers with a positive image of the firm, its products, or its affiliations (Campbell et al., 2010). B2B companies must be able to determine which content matches their company's identity so that the delivery delivered to the public is not misperceived.

2.2.2 Number of Followers

Following is a one-way connection; users can see posts from the person they follow without being connected to them. They will not see the posts. Conversely, people who follow can read the posts, but unless the user follows them back, the user will not see theirs (Scaravelli, 2020). To maintain the number of followers in a company, LinkedIn has analytics tools like a highlight (i.e., include total all-time number of followers, information on new number of followers in the last 29 days with percentage), follower metrics (i.e., the graph of number followers' growth), and follower demographics (i.e., location distribution of followers). Followers are various social media users who have subscribed to your account updates, such as new posts, articles, and comments. Building a social media follower base is extremely important for brands, as it contributes to better marketing responsiveness and leads to generational efforts. Therefore, suggestions on how to increase the number of followers for B2B marketers are essential for a deeper understanding of digital marketing strategies (Prodromou, 2015). The last study by Cortez et al. (2023) said that social posts could drive the number of followers. Determining content on social media, if appropriate, will affect the number of followers on the LinkedIn platform. If the content created is in accordance with the public's tastes, they will not hesitate to follow the company's social media. Building upon Cortez et al.'s (2023) findings, this study hypothesizes that the alignment of appropriate social media content with public preferences will positively impact follower numbers on the LinkedIn platform, emphasizing that follower acquisition hinges on content resonance with the audience.

2.2.3 Engagement Rate

LinkedIn's features and mechanisms make social media marketing possible by enabling users and businesses to communicate through posts (Cortez et al., 2023). Reactions are a set of expressions that allow users to join in conversations and connect with their network more easily. On the LinkedIn platform, there are six interaction behaviors: celebrate, support, love, insight, and curiosity. The "share" option, which allows users to share posts in their LinkedIn feed, is another method of responding to posts. The main difference between sharing and reactions (e.g., likes) is that the former allows including comments and tagging hashtags of organizations (e.g., managers or businesses) the company wants to be seen by. Second, "clicks" is a heuristic, indicating how responsive the post's call-to-action is and the total number of logged-in users who clicked (Macready, 2023). A previous study by Cortez et al. (2023) found that social posts affect engagement. People who like the content that the company creates will interact with the posts. Also, engagement has casualties with follower numbers and impressions (Cortez et al., 2022). Many followers can increase the number of interactions on posts because they are engaged with the company. Based on the prior research conducted by Cortez et al. (2023) suggesting that social posts influence engagement, it is hypothesized that individuals favoring the company's content will actively engage with the posts, with this engagement further correlating with both follower numbers and impressions, as noted by Cortez et al. (2022); additionally, a higher follower count may lead to increased post interactions due to heightened engagement with the company.

2.2.4 Impressions

Exposure is hearing, watching, or reading news contained in the media or experiencing and paying attention to news that may happen to individual or group (Ardianto, 2014). When a user views a post, this is known as exposure or impressions, and it is the first sign of interaction on LinkedIn. Users can pause while scrolling through their LinkedIn feeds to view posts created by the network (Cortez et al., 2023). When the update is viewed, it gives an impression. According to Sehl and Baird (2020), LinkedIn defines an impression as the total number of times at least 50% of postings were read for more than 300 milliseconds. Impressions are important to encourage sales and spread brand awareness (Prodromou, 2015). Previous research by Cortez et al. (2022) said that social posts have casualties with impressions. Companies need to make sure about the number of posts soon, which can affect impressions and make the public bored. Drawing from Cortez et al.'s (2022) prior research indicating that social posts have implications for impressions, it is hypothesized that companies must carefully manage their post frequency in the upcoming period, as an excessive number of posts could lead to decreased impressions and potential audience disinterest.
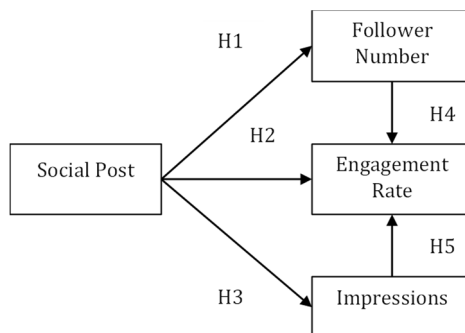

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Research setting

The empirical setting is an Indonesian B2B marine company operating nationwide. Over time, companies feel the need for a digital marketing strategy, especially social media activation. It has been two years since the company had three platforms: LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. However, currently, their focus is on the LinkedIn platform to increase their brand awareness. On the other hand, competitors have also started their social media activities, even though they are not as active. The company needs to know what kind of post strategy social media users favor. We use a quantitative approach for this research to analyze the secondary data from the firm after they generate it from the LinkedIn analytics tool. In this research, we use the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method to analyze secondary data from companies on LinkedIn. With SEM, we can reveal deeper and more complex relationships between the variables involved (Hair et al., 2018). We investigate how social posts relate to engagement rates on the LinkedIn platform while considering the mediating variables of follower numbers and impressions.

3.2 Data Collection

Social Post. Based on the content, the B2B company's LinkedIn profile divided its posts into sales, technical, and social posts (Cortez et al., 2023). In this research, we counted social posts over the course of a year and got 30 samples.

Number of Followers. The daily count of new LinkedIn followers for the company during the specified period is what we compile. LinkedIn followers are acquired naturally or through sponsored activity. In the data we take directly from LinkedIn Analytic, the numbers appear only in organic activity because the company does not invest in sponsored activities or advertising.

Engagement Rate. The result of the total number of reactions (e.g., like, like, celebrate), clicks, comments, and shares based on all posts on the focused company's LinkedIn page during the specific period in which the company posted All these metrics are then combined to create an engagement variable (Vieira et al., 2019). Data for engagement variables comes directly from LinkedIn Analytics.

Impressions. This is operationalized using impressions, or the number of times a post was viewed by LinkedIn users, impacting how people feel about the company and what they do (add followers) (Cortez et al., 2023). Impressions were converted for all social postings within that period in LinkedIn analytics, much like other factors in our model.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the data sets derived from the measurements described previously. This data set includes records collected since the company began its engagement on the LinkedIn platform in 2022 and expanded consistently through the end of April 2023.

Table 1: Firm Generate Data

Social Post	Total Monthly Post	Number of Followers	Impressions	Engagement rate %
Post 1	1	20	3938	11.43
Post 2	9	198	4383	11.43
Post 3	9	16	2446	2.84
Post 4	9	1	526	3.14
Post 5	9	37	967	6.18
Post 6	9	93	1298	3.29
Post 7	9	188	1234	7.65
Post 8	9	127	1612	7.84
Post 9	9	40	1447	7.65
Post 10	9	48	411	16.90
Post 11	8	64	3458	8.05

Social Post	Total Monthly Post	Number of Followers	Impressions	Engagement rate %
Post 12	8	1	960	2.76
Post 13	8	3	1571	9.97
Post 14	8	20	443	8.07
Post 15	8	2	215	5.43
Post 16	8	0	1048	5.12
Post 17	8	2	1048	4.43
Post 18	8	4	983	8.99
Post 19	7	4	967	7.25
Post 20	7	2	1024	4.37
Post 21	7	2	1024	3.36
Post 22	7	1	432	6.75
Post 23	7	2	409	5.79
Post 24	7	2	343	5.80
Post 25	7	1	446	5.94
Post 26	2	1	297	3.13
Post 27	2	54	985	5.50
Post 28	1	8	715	2.15
Post 29	2	2	1759	4.62
Post 30	2	10	643	2.01

4. Results

Table 2: Hypothesis Test Results

	Original	Sample	Standard	T	P
Social Post -> Number of Followers	0.304	0.302	0.102	2.975	0.003
Social Post -> Engagement Rate	0.257	0.262	0.205	1.257	0.209
Social Post -> Impressions	-0.007	0.011	0.232	0.029	0.977
Number of Followers -> Engagement	0.176	0.196	0.205	0.858	0.391
Impressions -> Engagement Rate	0.257	0.219	0.312	0.825	0.409

Through the utilization of SmartPLS for data analysis, a notable discovery emerged, indicating that social media posting exhibited a 0.003 percent positive influence on the augmentation of follower count (refer to Table 2). This result is consistent with the research findings made by Cortez et al. (2023), who highlighted the significant positive impact of post type on follower numbers. The current finding gains further substantiation as the company has consistently engaged in posting content predominantly centered around social themes in recent months, strategically enhancing its design to capture increased attention and thus successfully fostering a greater follower base.

Social posts have no correlation to engagement. To encourage digital conversation in B2B, this type of social post is needed because it has a stronger emotional appeal, so there is attachment (Swani et al., 2014). Companies must build even better emotional attachments to each social post so that it can be even better at attracting engagement. LinkedIn's proven engagement rate is around 2%, which is influenced by several factors, with one of the crucial being the time the post was posted. For businesses on B2B, it's best to post around 8 a.m., 10 a.m. to noon, and 6 p.m., while the ideal day to post on LinkedIn is on a Wednesday (Santora, 2021).

The findings concerning social media posts and impressions reveal a lack of correlation in the obtained results. Contrasting with the observations made by Corez et al. (2022), which indicated that post-enthusiasm has a longer-lasting effect on impressions compared to likes, this study's results suggest a different pattern. Interestingly, there appears to be an inverse relationship between the frequency of social media posts and the number of impressions generated. Specifically, a higher volume of social posts leads to a decrease in impressions, while a lower number of posts yields a higher impression count. Consequently, it becomes crucial for companies to strategically manage the

frequency of their social media posts within a defined timeframe to sustain consistently impressive impression figures.

Despite the findings in Cortez et al.'s research (2023) highlighting number of followers as a significant factor in driving engagement for companies, the current study observes a lack of correlation between follower numbers and engagement rates. Surprisingly, company social media posts continue to struggle to elicit meaningful engagement from the public. Interestingly, a shift in focus is apparent among LinkedIn users, who exhibit a heightened interest in employee recruitment-related content rather than actively engaging with company posts.

The absence of a correlation between impressions and engagement, coupled with their lack of significance, underscores a nuanced relationship between these variables. Impressions indeed hold the potential to impact the degree of engagement. When a substantial number of impressions coexist with low levels of engagement, it serves as an indicator that content improvement is imperative. The engagement rate, operating as a gauge of people's willingness to actively participate, is pivotal in gauging their comfort level with the content. However, as Chen's research (2023) emphasizes, engagement also serves as proof that the content possesses qualities deserving of greater visibility.

5. General Discussion

This study reveals that the utilization of social-themed posts on LinkedIn has the potential to augment the follower count of B2B enterprise in Indonesia. However, it is important to note that such social posts themed do not have a statistically significant impact on engagement rates and impressions. The findings of this study underscore the significance of incorporating social-themed material as a means of cultivating a larger audience. However, it is important to acknowledge that such content may not have a direct impact on engagement rates or impressions. Several factors may have contributed to the results of this study. LinkedIn users, particularly those engaged in B2B business interactions, exhibit a greater inclination towards consuming content that is serious and informative, as opposed to content centered around social themes. Furthermore, it is plausible that the presence of social-themed content on these platforms engenders competition with a plethora of other content, hence posing challenges in terms of differentiation and visibility. Furthermore, the temporal aspect of posting and the alignment of material with the objectives of the platform can also exert an impact on user engagement. Furthermore, it is crucial to maintain consistency between the brand and corporate identity on LinkedIn. If social themed content deviates from the established image of the firm, its ability to capture attention and foster participation may be diminished.

5.1 Academic Implications

The utilization of social media by enterprise inside a digital ecosystem has a discernible influence on the capacity of a B2B hub to produce fresh sales (Vieira et al., 2019). According to Cortez et al. (2023), the utilization of alternative sales channels by firms may have a detrimental impact on managers' willingness to efficiently manage digital tools, hence limiting the potential of social media. The results of our study may exhibit disparities when compared to the findings of Cortez et al. (2023), who observed that this particular form of online content has the potential to enhance user engagement and boost impressions. However, it is important to note that this sort of post also presents certain limitations, such as its inability to significantly impact engagement and impressions, similar to social media postings. The findings of this study suggest that professionals working in business-to-business (B2B) organizations in Indonesia have the potential to enhance their follower count by employing social-themed posts on the LinkedIn network. The assertion is that in the realm of social media, it is imperative to thoroughly deliberate on content strategy to cater to audience preferences, while simultaneously considering content diversity and optimal posting times, with the aim of maximizing growth potential.

5.2   Business Implications

This study holds importance within the realm of business, as the conceptual model it presents can be utilized as a marketing tool. One perspective on a follower is that they might be considered as a pre-screened potential customer who demonstrates a strong inclination towards the business. According to Cortez et al. (2023), initiating a conversation with those who are already following an individual or a group is comparatively more convenient than engaging in a discussion with individuals who are not followers. The results of our study indicate that there is a correlation between social media themes and the number of followers. Hence, the greater number of followers our unit analysis possesses in comparison to competitors can be attributed to its higher engagement rate, as the latter mostly focuses on social issues in their posts. B2B enterprises should exercise caution in order to avoid overwhelming their consumers, as indicated by Prodromou (2015), given the prescribed upper limit for sales-related content. To enhance the follower count of B2B enterprises in Indonesia, we propose augmenting the utilization of social-themed postings on the LinkedIn platform. It is important to maintain content diversity and consider optimal posting times while sharing information. The implementation of ongoing data analysis is necessary in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the influence exerted by social media posts. In order to optimize the influence of social media in B2B business, it is imperative for enterprises to engage in active audience interaction, explore more pertinent channels, and consistently adapt their content strategy in response to algorithmic modifications on these platforms. Moreover, the firm's recent achievements have generated an element of surprise, so stimulating the market's inquisitiveness to acquire knowledge about it by means of "hard selling" strategies.

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5.3   Limitation

This study aims to provide an academic analysis of the mechanics involved in B2B social media marketing on LinkedIn. It highlights the existing defects and emphasizes the necessity to fix significant disadvantages identified in prior investigations. Nevertheless, there are notable limitations that present potential avenues for future research. The available data obtained from organizations that have recently implemented a digital marketing strategy is limited. Therefore, modifying the unit of analysis would need adjusting the outcomes of the many hypotheses that now exist. Furthermore, the cultural implications of using social media platforms may vary (Cortez, 2023; Zhang, 2020). This work provides a foundation for future investigations that can delve deeper into this topic. Further investigation is required to conduct a more complete study that delves deeper into the impact of certain variables, such as the type of B2B business, company size, or more specific content categories, on the efficacy of social-themed posts on professional social media platforms like LinkedIn.

Moreover, there exists the possibility of conducting comparative analyses between the findings of this study and those from other nations or extending the scope of the research to encompass additional social media platforms. Such endeavors would contribute to a more comprehensive comprehension of the impact of socially themed posts within the B2B business environment. Further investigation is warranted to explore the cultural and demographic variables that exert an influence on users' preferences and interactions while consuming social material across various platforms.

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