

The Role of Social Media in Promoting Indonesian Women's Online Entrepreneurship: Prospects, Challenges, and Strategies

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Abstract

Social media nowadays has been inevitably used by people in the world. It plays significant roles for human's society including as the way of marketing and trading of products. The aim of this study was mainly to explore the prospects of using social media in driving and developing women's entrepreneurship, its challenges and strategies. This present study anchored in a qualitative research. Data were garnered through semi-structured interviews to Indonesian women living in Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia running their online entrepreneurship as the additional job not the main ones. The results of the study revealed that the prospects of using social media cover it is beneficial for women's entrepreneurship in improving sales and pursuing the innovation in their online business, it offers others to be reseller in a number of products and it allows the women to develop their online entrepreneurship. However, there are a number of challenges of using social media in online entrepreneurship including the emergence of negative comments and complaints about the products from costumers that will lead to decrease the reputation of business, poor connection of internet which may hinder a better business management, and the lack of knowledge about social media and team that can hinder these women entrepreneurs to handle their customers' inquiries. Some strategies that need to be taken into account in online women's entrepreneurship cover women entrepreneurs are supposed to upload new and up-to-date products, give best services to customers, collaborate with Shopee application (online shopping platform) in which they will get less risk in online business through its system and increase their innovation through online business class and trainings. The findings of the study offer an implication to the need of being innovative through the use of technology and social media in running online entrepreneurship particularly for women entrepreneurs since its flexibility and benefits as one of the ways to get additional income.

Keywords: Challenges, Online Entrepreneurship, Prospects, Social Media, Women



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology has led people to use social media over the past decade. The development of technology has spread around the world rapidly (Khurram Khan & Alginahi, 2013). The increased use of the internet is proved by the data of the Internet World Statistics exploring that the total of internet users as of June 2018 exceeded 4 billion meaning that approximately 55, 1 % of the world population accesses the internet (*Internet World Statistics*, 2018). Interestingly, the growth of the world internet users from 2000 to 2018 has achieved 1, 066 %. With regard to this, the number of the internet users in Asia as of June 2018 exceeded 2 billion and it becomes the largest of the world internet users. This, therefore, will lead people to access the social media progressively. In accordance with the utilization of social media, it has been widely utilized by both individuals and businesses to share information and promote products and innovation around the world. Further, a number of social media including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube have been used to enhance activities in daily life. Furthermore, the social media users have been able to share their ideas and encounters (Mukolwe & Korir, 2016).

Regarding the social media utilization, it has numerous benefits particularly for online promotion. As reported by Smith & Taylor cited in Mukolwe & Korir, social media has broader access to various audiences, increases customer services and products (Mukolwe & Korir, 2016). Social media plays a main role for businesses in accessing resources widely, becomes a mains for building a direct relationship with customers and provides feedback particularly on services and products (Zafar *et al.*, 2018). Referring to these descriptions, it could be deduced that a number of businesses have been turning to social media as a communication tool. Additionally, marketers can progressively develop their online presence by building online social networking that the customers have and making use of social media in businesses.

In accordance with the importance of entrepreneurship, it has been introduced to students in some higher education to promote better outcomes for graduates. Regarding this, the education of entrepreneurship is considerably crucial for students to equip themselves with mindsets, manners and skills enhancing them to build their successful future (Hannon, 2018). Further, in order to gain successful entrepreneurship, ethical perspectives need to be adopted as a means to achieve the goal of entrepreneurship (Bjärsholm *et*

al., 2018). Interestingly, a better entrepreneurship will maintain a main role in the economic development of country and it needs to consider a number of resources including financial, human, family and social capital (Ali *et al.*, 2017). Referring to it, information relating the market condition is crucially needed by entrepreneurs to foster their skills, financial resources, family's support and networks.

Along with businesses, women nowadays have played a crucial role for empowering entrepreneurship. Enhanced by sophisticated technology, many women have opportunities to determine their prospects and benefits by making use of social media. Further, they can use social media for many purposes including promoting products, having connection with customers and managing the relationship. Additionally, they should find ways to access resources and growth from various contexts including culture, policy, and economic condition (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017). Regarding this, entrepreneurship is considerably playing a crucial role in enhancing social and economic development. This, therefore, has attracted women to take part in businesses. With regard to it, women may have utilized and accessed the business to fill the family delegation and work roles (Xheneti *et al.*, 2019).

A tremendous amount of research regarding women's entrepreneurship has been conducted by some researchers. Spring explores the entrepreneurial landscape of African women by displaying the range of women entrepreneurs from formal and informal sectors (Spring, 2009). Further, Bobrowska & Conrad investigate the portrayal of Japanese women entrepreneurs in business press from 1990 to 2014 in which women are positioned as inferior in discourse of entrepreneurship and social order (Bobrowska & Conrad, 2017). In conjunction with social media, the literature review about women entrepreneurs and social media which can bring some opportunities for creating new businesses, flexibility and their attributes (Francesca *et al.*, 2017a). Interestingly, entrepreneurs and innovators nowadays have had a great impact on exploration, education, development of productivity (Abouzeedan *et al.*, 2010). In addition, innovation is considered as an effective way in filling the void and building legitimacy (Onsongo, 2019).

Many studies report that men are positioned as superior in terms of entrepreneurship. One of them is the study undertaken by (Bobrowska & Conrad, 2017) portraying the Japanese women entrepreneurs in business press and they are positioned as inferior in terms of entrepreneurship. In addition, less studies exploring the entrepreneurship run by women particularly those considering their business is an additional job not

the main ones. Likewise, women's entrepreneurship has developed in Indonesia through social media. It has been proved by the increased use of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram among Indonesian women entrepreneurs having the main job as educators and staffs in an institution to get more income through promoting the products. Therefore, this study explores the prospects of using social media for promoting Indonesian women's entrepreneurship as the additional job to get more income. In addition, it describes the challenges and strategies of using social media in running their entrepreneurship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Social Media in Entrepreneurship

Nowadays, social media plays a crucial role in engaging innovation in an entrepreneurship. Supported by the rapid development of technology, social media has given and ideas on giving better services to customers and found out the creative and innovative products (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013, p. 216). In addition, the usage of social media has intensively increased from individuals to entrepreneurship (Mukolwe & Korir, 2016, p. 248). A number of entrepreneurs have utilized social media as a way to get millions of benefits and repeat customers (Mukolwe & Korir, 2016, p. 248). In accordance with the benefits, social media allows people to gain wider social networking, attract the interest of customers, promote innovation, and build strategies in entrepreneurship. In this sense, many entrepreneurs and businesses have utilized social media as a means of increasing their online marketing and effective services.

The Women Entrepreneurship

In this era, women have played an important role in developing entrepreneurship. In addition, it has obtained opportunities shown by the number of women enterprises and their contribution on economic development (Ambiga & Ramasamy, 2013, p. 371). In addition, women have given contribution to family businesses and become the crucial aspect in supporting economic development (Fazalbhoj, 2014). In other words, they can use social media to obtain financial independence. Further, women may take benefits of using social media for gaining many friends. This will lead to the growing trend among women to create businesses through social media. It has been proved by the data in Indonesia reporting that the 549,740 users registered on Facebook as the owners of small and

medium enterprises, 176,300 of them are women (Melissa *et al.*, 2013, p. 79). Referring to it, social media is considerably important to help women develop their entrepreneurship.

Online Entrepreneurship

The rapid development of information communication technology (ICT), entrepreneurs nowadays have been faced with challenging competitive atmosphere. Consequently, the demands of the customers are moving to outstanding innovation. Furthermore, through the global competition, a number of customers are opting to select new products. Therefore, new technologies including social media and other applications are badly needed to enhance online entrepreneurship. It can promote some benefits including drawing the customers' attention and satisfaction. Interestingly, the use of technology enables the companies to respond to the needs of the customers in this global market (Krom, 2015). In online entrepreneurship, some strategies are pivotal to promote the products. One of them is the need of creating online products content to attract the audience. It is intended to stimulate interest of the viewers. Then, the online content can be uploaded into social media like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and so forth. For this reason, it should draw viewers and market a product. There are some crucial things in making content marketing strategies. These cover the need of being consistent, persistent and patient with the content marketing strategy. In this case, being consistent means keeping the promises of customers (Finkle & Olsen, 2019). This is line with the statement of Frazer and Ewing highlighting that the benefits of online market include developing some projects, developing income for novice entrepreneurs, easing transitions to a market economy, accommodating the jobseekers to get money or income (Frazier & Ewing, 2009).

RESEARCH METHOD

This article was conducted as qualitative in nature and data were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews with four Indonesian women who run online entrepreneurship as the additional job rather than the main ones. They consist of two female lecturers (woman 1 and woman 2) and two female staffs (woman 3 and woman 4) at one of State Islamic universities in Indonesia to obtain greater information regarding the role of social media in their entrepreneurship, its prospects, challenges and strategies used by them

in running their online business. These participants were chosen based on the personal relationship between the writers and the participants. They have given the permission and they were willing to get involved with this study. For this reason, it is hoped that the writer can build communication, get more data. In the process of interviews, we ensured the confidentiality of the participants' identities by convincing that all names were anonymized. Based on the agreement between the researcher and the participants, the process of interviews was conducted using WhatsApp media. Further, the writers adopted the approach guided by Cooke and Wills cited in Mukolwe & Korir reporting that a greater understanding of social media and social networks could be generated by having a look at smaller businesses (Mukolwe & Korir, 2016).

RESULTS

Social media has given a number of better prospects for women's online entrepreneurship. First, it offers flexibility and mobility for women in running their online entrepreneurship. The second prospect of using social media in online entrepreneurship is it offers a business to expand through widespread social networking which can be considered as a better way to gain new customers. Third, social media are beneficial for women entrepreneurship in improving sales and pursuing the innovation in their online business. Fourth, social media offer others to be reseller in a number of products and allow the women to develop their online entrepreneurship. Based on the result of interview, there are some challenges of using social media in online entrepreneurship. First, the emergence of negative comments and complaints about the products from costumers that will lead to decrease the reputation of business. Second, poor connection of internet may hinder a better business management. Thus, this pursues the lecturers and students who run the online business to utilize the better internet connection at campus through Wi-Fi. Third, the lack of knowledge about social media and team hinders these women entrepreneurs to handle their customers' inquiries.

DISCUSSION

Prospects of Using Social Media for Women Entrepreneurship

The growth of social media can be considered as a better evolution particularly in entrepreneurship. It has provided an outstanding impact on facilitating global social networking (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013). Referring to it, social media has given a number of better prospects for women entrepreneurship.

First, it offers flexibility and mobility for women in running their online entrepreneurship. In fact, women entrepreneurs including lecturers and students can easily run their entrepreneurship from anywhere and at any time. This flexibility allows the lecturers to work at campus while running their entrepreneurship at the same time. Moreover, it offers the students to study at campus while managing their entrepreneurship. With regard to it, social media used by them includes Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. In this case, Facebook is the social media mostly used by the lecturers and students in running their online business. By using Facebook, they can easily share, collaborate and build online communities. Interestingly, these social media do not need capitals usually included in a traditional business especially a physical shop or store. It has been proved by the interview with women 1, the lecturer who run online entrepreneurship, reporting that she likes running business since she was an undergraduate student. The growth of technology has pursued her to use social media in online entrepreneurship. In addition, she uses Facebook and WhatsApp in running her business. Through Facebook, she can upload the products including clothes and hijab.

The second prospect of using social media in online entrepreneurship is it offers a business to expand through widespread social networking which can be considered as a better way to gain new customers. Additionally, social networking sites offers a voice related to design, promotion, products, and supports (Francesca *et al.*, 2017b). In this sense, social media provide accessible ways to upload products, write information, contacts and many more. It has been strengthened by Women 2, the lecturer at one of the State Islamic Universities in Indonesia who runs online entrepreneurship, explaining that online entrepreneurship mainly facilitates her to sell some products consisting of clothes, electronics, food, health products to wider communities. In this regard, she does not need to build a store to keep her products. Interestingly, online entrepreneurship allows her to contact producers when she gets more requests from the customers. Likewise, it is well experienced by women 3, the staff at one of the State Islamic Universities in Indonesia who runs the online entrepreneurship, highlighting that social media exactly facilitate her to earn money while studying. Indeed, she utilizes sorts of social media including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. In this sense, Facebook is the one that she mostly used in online entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Facebook offers her to widen social networking around the world allowing others to buy her products.

Third, social media are beneficial for women entrepreneurship in improving sales and pursuing the innovation in their online business. With regard to this, the increased use of social media provides insights, ideas and experience related to the ways of giving well services to customers. Thus, women can reach a balance of work-life through entrepreneurship and they are considered as role models (Bobrowska & Conrad, 2017). It is in conjunction with the result of interviews with the female lecturers and staffs reporting that they keep enjoying their online business while working and studying at campus. Social media has merely improved their sales and pursuing them to improve the innovation in their online business. Moreover, they can upgrade their ideas through innovation and modernity obtained from social media such as Facebook and Instagram. Through these social media, they can widely access the innovation of fashion, clothes, and other products. Consequently, they are pursued to upload fashion, clothes and products in accordance with the new model and innovation based on the up-to-date trend.

Fourth, social media offer others to be reseller in a number of products and allow the women to develop their online entrepreneurship. In this sense, social media can improve market share for women entrepreneurship. This finding is in conjunction with the previous researcher highlighting that social media really improve the product sale around the world (Zafar *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, it has been reported by woman 2 and woman 4, as the lecturer and the staff at one of the State Islamic Universities in Indonesia, that they have some resellers from diverse cities in central Java, Indonesia, including Demak, Pati, Kudus, Jepara, and Semarang so that they can increase the product sale. This has been proved by the following extracts:

“I like running the online business since its flexibility. I can teach while running the business. I just upload the products such as fashion, clothes, electricity and others to social media especially on Facebook. Interestingly, many people around the world can see the products I have shared and then purchase it. Moreover, I offer some people to resell my products. As a result, I now have some resellers from various cities in Central Java like Semarang, Demak, Kudus, Jepara and Semarang” (woman 2, 10 May 2019).

Likewise, woman 4, the staff, has argued that social media is beneficial for her enterprise and provides customers services especially resellers. It has been proved by the following extracts:

“Social media is really beneficial for me in managing entrepreneurship. I used many kinds of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Further, I use shopee application which enable me get more benefits than others. I have many resellers through social media. They are from different cities and provinces like Bandung, Surabaya, and Kalimantan. By using shopee, I can get less risk of my business since it has been managed by shopee agency. Interestingly, the buyers can purchase products by clicking them and then they can transfer money to shopee agency. Then, the shopee agency will upload the receipt of delivery products to the buyers. Further, the buyers are supposed to confirm the seller. Finally, the shopee agency will transfer me money as a seller. Through using shopee application, I have 1.500 followers that can see products” (woman 4, 10 May 2019).

Surprisingly, the women entrepreneurs especially the lecturers have utilized WhatsApp group established by academicians called “LAPAK” for the purpose of online business. Further, this entrepreneurship group offers for some women of increasing socio-economic status is a strategy to have their own income(Ennis, 2019). In accordance with the members of this WhatsApp Group, female lecturers and staffs are free to join it. Through this group, the members are able to upload and share their products including food, fruits and clothes. Thus, this creates flexibility and partnerships since they have already known each other.

Challenges of Using Social Media for Women Entrepreneurship

Despite its prospects, social media have a number of challenges for online entrepreneurship. Based on the result of interview, there are some challenges of using social media in online entrepreneurship. First, the emergence of negative comments and complaints about the products from costumers that will lead to decrease the reputation of business. In addition, some costumers give some questions about the products but they decided not to buy them. Consequently, this will automatically waste the business owner’s time. Second, poor connection of internet may hinder a better business management. Thus, this pursues the lecturers and students who run the online business to utilize the better internet connection at campus through Wi-Fi. Third, the lack of knowledge about social media and team hinders these women entrepreneurs to handle their customers’ inquiries. This condition may hinder the development of entrepreneurship in the digital era.

Considering this, they are motivated to join online class business in social media like Facebook. This has been proved by the response of the lecturers and students who run the online business:

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“My challenge is the lack of knowledge in business innovation. This makes me find someone to help me run this business. In this manner, I ask my student to join my business. She helps me upload fashion product on Facebook, comment and answer the customers questions and others. Moreover, I ask her to learn online business application to improve my online business” (Woman 1, 10 May 2019).

This finding is strengthened by woman 3, the staff who also runs the online business that she is supposed to enrich her knowledge in online business innovation. Further, she is now trying to join an online business class in social media especially on Facebook. This is proved by the following extracts:

“I always pursue myself to give an innovation in my online business. Besides getting up-to-date products, I start joining an online business class on Facebook. It is very useful for me in improving my services to customers. Hopefully, I can use shopee application to enhance my business development. I am now in the process of registering this application. Considering its benefits, I ask my friends to teach me how to apply this shopee application (Woman 3, 10 May 2019).

Strategies of Women Entrepreneurs in Improving their Online Business and Islamic Ethic Implementation

In order to improve online entrepreneurship, the lecturers and students as the women entrepreneurs are supposed to have strategies in using social media. First, they are supposed to upload new and up-to-date products. Trend in fashion has nowadays developed rapidly. Therefore, the women entrepreneurs are highly motivated to get up-to-date to their products by uploading products worn by the actors and actresses. This hopefully will attract the customer’s interest to the products. Second, the women entrepreneurs merely are motivated to give best services to customers. This can be done by having services called “Cash on Delivery or COD” in which the entrepreneurs and customers meet in certain reachable places to make deal of business. Third, the women entrepreneurs are highly motivated to collaborate with “Shopee” application in which they will get less risk in online business through its system. Interestingly, the entrepreneurs are able to manage the display of

“shopee” to attract their customers. Fourth, the women entrepreneurs have initiated to give discount to customers based on the certain rules that can be managed in the menu of “shopee” seller centre. The above descriptions are proved by the following extracts:

“I am highly interested in joining shopee application since its flexibility and benefits. I can manage discount through shopee seller center. This can be done by observing the market price by considering the price from the producers. I usually give discount 8-15%. In addition, I can promote my products by using “Top up Menu” in which I transfer money to shopee. In this sense, fifty thousand rupiahs for promoting products in twelve days, twenty-five thousand rupiahs for promoting products in seven days. Surprisingly, shopee application also provide menu for promoting products without a charge. This can be done by promoting five products every four hours” (Woman 4, 10 May 2019).

Another strategy related to do Cash on Delivery (COD) to give customer services is delivered by woman 2, the lecturer who runs the online business:

“In order to give best services to customers, I use strategy in Cash on Delivery or COD. I can manage time and location where I meet my customer to deliver the products. By using COD, a lot of customers are interested in purchasing my products considering the free cost. Furthermore, I get more closed to my customers to widen social networking. By having more customers, my product of online entrepreneurship will automatically increase” (Woman 2, 10 May 2019).

In line with the previous entrepreneurs, Woman 3 as the staff who runs the business also has strategies in increasing her online entrepreneurship. This can be done by giving best services through Cash on Delivery or COD and interesting discount to her customers. This is merely proved by the following extracts:

“Although I have a lot of customers, I need to develop my online entrepreneurship through strategies. One of them is by giving discount based on certain rules. Furthermore, I provide Cash and Delivery or COD to give better services to customer. I provide COD if the location of customer is not far from my house. Through COD, customer does not need to transfer money since they can pay when we meet and deliver the products” (Woman 3, 10 May 2019).

This finding is in agreement with the previous researcher highlighting that strategies are badly needed in improving business which can be done by creating content on social media and posting regularly the new products based on the outstanding trend (Abuznaid, 2009) Referring to above descriptions, it can be deduced that strategies in online entrepreneurship are badly crucial for the business development. In addition, the entrepreneurs are supposed to increase their innovation through online business class and trainings. This hopefully will lead to have more social networking and business development. Besides, both lecturers and staffs running the entrepreneurship have applied some Islamic ethics. Islamic business ethics refers to the code of moral principles based on the Quran and Sunnah (Abuznaid, 2009, p. 280; Che Omar & Saripuddin, 2015, p. 14). There are two dimensions in Islam including ethics to Allah and ethics toward others (Abuznaid, 2009, p. 279). With regard to this, ethics in business may refer to organizational and management ethics based on the Islamic context which covers goodness, justice, right, and so on. In this sense, the entrepreneurs are supposed to communicate ethically by conducting well treatment and relationship. In running the business, both lecturers and students have maintained the Islamic ethics in business. These include having good intention, avoiding practice usury, prohibiting scams element, keeping justice and trust. As a result, those values are vital to develop the entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

Social media nowadays has offered women a great chance to have online entrepreneurship as the additional job. In addition, it allows women entrepreneurs and customers to share their products on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and so on. With regard to this, social media, therefore, facilitates the Indonesian female lecturers and staffs in running their online business. In other words, the prospects of using social media cover it is beneficial for women's entrepreneurship in improving sales and pursuing the innovation in their online business, it offers others to be reseller in a number of products and it allows the women to develop their online entrepreneurship.

However, there are a number of challenges of using social media in online entrepreneurship including the emergence of negative comments and complaints about the products from costumers that will lead to decrease the reputation of business, poor connection of internet which may hinder a better business management, and the lack of knowledge about social

media and team that can hinder these women entrepreneurs to handle their customers' inquiries. Some strategies that need to be taken into account in online women's entrepreneurship cover women entrepreneurs are supposed to upload new and up-to-date products, give best services to customers, collaborate with "Shopee" application in which they will get less risk in online business through its system and increase their innovation through online business class and trainings.

The findings of the study offer an implication to the need of being innovative through the use of technology and social media in running online entrepreneurship particularly for women entrepreneurs since its flexibility and benefits as one of the ways to get additional income. Further, this study kindly recommends that future researchers conduct studies of women online entrepreneurship from different and wider aspects. By conducting such research, we would merely get more insights on how social media is beneficial for business development.

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