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Marketing communication strategy for creative talents service providers a case study of an online marketplace in Indonesia

Nindyta Aisyah Dwityas [a,1,*], Rizki Briandana [b,2], Rustono Farady Marta [c,3], Isiaka Zubair Aliagan [d,4]

[a,b] Universitas Mercu Buana, Jl. Meruya Selatan, West Jakarta, Indonesia
[c] Universitas Bunda Mulia, Jl. Ancol Barat IV North Jakarta, Indonesia
[d] Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria
[1] nindyta.aisyah@mercubuana.ac.id*; [2] rizki.briandana@mercubuana.ac.id; [3] rmarta@bundamulia.ac.id; [4] isiaka.aliagan@kwasu.edu.ng
* corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the marketing communication strategy one of the creative talents service provider marketplace in Indonesia, namely Sociabuzz. The development of the marketplace business is not only limited to product sales, but has also begun to expand into the service sector. The marketplace is also open to creative industries to get customers or markets. The concept used in this research is Marketing Communication Strategy and Online Marketplace as one of the Sharing Economy Business Platforms. The research method used is a case study by conducting structured interviews with Strategic Planner, and Campaign and Marketing Executive of the organization. The results show the principles of sharing economy, especially those related to the principles of partnership, empowerment, and collaborative efforts, not only underlie Sociabuzz's business processes and strategies, but also form the basis of their marketing communication strategies, which are contained eight important stages: situation analysis, identification of advantages, formulation of big ideas for campaigns, targeting, determining communication objectives, budgeting, campaign implementation, and campaign evaluation.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia is the largest e-commerce market in Southeast Asia [1]. According to Wearesocial and Hootsuite data, around 90% of internet users in Indonesia have shopped online. In 2019, the value of e-commerce market capitalization in Indonesia reached USD 21 billion or around IDR 294 trillion. Based on the McKinsey report, the e-commerce industry in Indonesia is predicted to reach a value of USD 40 billion by 2022 [1]. There are several factors that influence the rapid development of e-commerce in Indonesia. With this rapid growth, every business and brand is competing to increase their online presence and boost their sales by entering various online sales platforms [2]. Along with the development of ICT, an e-commerce platform was developed which was built to handle the multi-vendor model [3]. Marketplace is an e-commerce platform that connects prospective buyers and sellers through internet networks and is able to facilitate the process of buying and selling, renting, exchanging, and negotiating [4].

Various marketplace classifications continue to emerge and support the development of the idea of a sharing economy, a term used to describe an open-source community that is entirely based on peer-to-peer transactions on the marketplace platform [5]. The six most common marketplace classifications found in this sharing economy era are people based, products based, places based, projects based, hybrid, and partners marketplace [2].

The six classifications show that the interactions and transactions that occur in a marketplace are not limited to the context of buying and selling products [2]. Moreover, various marketplace platforms have been able to facilitate the process of buying and selling, negotiating, leasing and exchanging property, projects, franchises, to interactions with experts, specialists, and professionals from various backgrounds [6].

Sociabuzz is an Indonesian people-based marketplace that focuses on services to bring together professionals and users or brand owners who need their services. In general, Sociabuzz mediates freelance workers who have competencies related to influencer services such as Selebgram, Blogger, Buzzer, and Youtuber. In addition, Sociabuzz is also a showroom and promotional media for other service providers such as writers, photographers, videographers, makeup artists, singers, bands, DJs, speakers, MCs, standup comedians to models. For this reason, the founders of Sociabuzz chose "Creator & Talent Marketplace" as their positioning. Currently, this positioning can be considered as an appropriate effort, especially when considering the rapid market needs and demands related to one-stop services that can support various business activities and online marketing [7].

As one of the pioneering creators and talent marketplaces in Indonesia, Sociabuzz has made various communicative and promotional efforts to expand its visibility and brand awareness to the Indonesian market, not only for potential creative service users, but also for its service providers to bridge various collaborative transactions that can empower both parties according to the principles of a sharing economy society. Sociabuzz as a marketplace that relies on communication and information technology facilities, especially the internet, implements marketing communication activities that do not only focus on online platforms, but also make communication efforts to potential users and creative service providers through various conventional channels and media [8].

Marketing communication as one of the important functions of companies, including those engaged in the online marketplace industry, plays an important role in its success in the market [9],[10]. Through an integrated and systematic marketing communication strategy, Sociabuzz is able to maintain and improve its brand position among the emergence of various similar marketplace platforms, especially in the Indonesian market [11].

The marketing communication strategy for the marketplace is a new concept that is still evolving along with the innovations made by startup businesses. As a reference point for marketing efforts, there is no single strategy that can be claimed to be successful in all forms of business under all conditions [12],[13]. Nonetheless, as one of the most dynamic and popular forms of business today, online marketplaces require a lot of input to build and develop their marketing communication efforts [14].

The research question posed here is how the marketing communication strategy designed, implemented, controlled and evaluated by Sociabuzz can support its success. The results of this study will be beneficial for start-ups, especially those that focus on sharing business platforms that aim to develop their business through optimizing their marketing communication activities.

2. Theorical Framework

2.1 Marketing Communication Strategy

Marketing communication plays an important role in determining the profitability and success of a brand in the market. Marketing communication refers to the "promotion" aspect contained in the 4P of the marketing mix: product, price, place, and promotion [15]. As an important aspect in the marketing mix, marketing communication is the largest communication component in the company, which allows the company to present company values, goals or certain products and services to investors, customers or the general public. In its development, current communication goals focus on creating customized messages, aimed at target groups to specific individuals with the

hope of being able to create positive responses to high brands and greater and more valuable brand interactions [16].

Management of marketing communications in a particular company or brand needs to involve strategic planning that is systematic, implementative, and measurable. This strategic plan can be arranged in a marketing communication strategy. The word 'strategy' has various meanings and associations. The management literature on strategy is very broad, there is little agreement or consensus on the definition or on how the strategy should be developed. Basically, the consensus leads to the concept of a strategy that includes the design, implementation and evaluation of actions that focus on the satisfaction or achievement of predetermined goals [17]. Strategy, objectives, tactics, and implementation are separate activities, but all are integral parts of strategy.

From various literatures regarding the definition of a marketing communication strategy, Fill & Turnbull (2016) conclude four main interpretations of the concept. This interpretation states that the concept of a marketing communication strategy can refer to four main things, i.e. brand position, audience, platform, and pattern or configuration. The development of a marketing communication plan helps minimize errors and increase efficiency and effectiveness [19]. There are a number of elements and activities that need to be built into a marketing communication program so that the strategy can be implemented. These elements relate to the objectives, resources, communication tools to be used and the control and evaluation processes [20].

There are at least eight elements that need to be considered and compiled in a marketing communication strategy so that this strategy can run effectively and efficiently. These elements are: Context analysis (which is built from a communication perspective), Communications objectives, Marketing communications strategy, Coordinated communications mix (tools, media, and content), Resources (human and financial aspects), Scheduling and implementation, Evaluation and control, and Feedback [18].

2.2 Online Marketplace as one of the Sharing Economy Business Platforms

Consumption patterns have changed since the sharing economy phenomenon began to become more popular and penetrate into traditional industries, such as transportation, hospitality, tourism, education, job market, and so on [21]. It is a concept that is rapidly developing and is spreading to many countries. The sharing economy business model raises pros and cons which creates opportunities and new business models. According to Haftor and Mirijamdotter (2011) the paradigm shift caused by technology can be bigger than the industrial revolution. Therefore, it shows that managers must be ready for change and adapt to new circumstances. In practice, the sharing economy develops various forms.

Querbes (2018) makes effort to develop a definition of sharing economy according to its practice in the following 6 different classes: 1) Rental economy: An economy built on rental schemes run by companies that specialize in the rental business of goods that are generally less used when the user has exclusive private ownership (e.g. shared cars such as ZipCar); 2) Peer-to-peer economy: An economic scheme concerning goods which are also underutilized, but which are offered directly by their owners (platforms such as AirBnB); 3) On-demand economy: An economic scheme characterized by using staking personal services provided by professionals and non-professionals (platforms like Uber); 4) Time banking and local exchange trading system: This scheme is similar to the previous one in terms of services offered, but shows a fundamental difference in the lack of money in transactions, and instead uses the form of bartering based on the use of an alternative currency or time as the unit of value of the services being exchanged. (platforms like TimeRepublik); 5) FLOSS—free/libre open source software: This is the oldest case of the shared economy experience associated with free or open source software programs produced by a community of developers and users (Linux); 6) Social lending and crowdfunding: This scheme is about applying finance to the sharing economy which includes direct loans between people and platforms that help raise the capital needed for new idea development among those potentially interested in the idea (platforms like Kick starter).

The success of economic sharing platforms is determined by their ability to exploit limited fluidity [24]. The main challenge is finding the right composition of the market coordination mechanism and platform organization. Ioanna Constantiou et al. (2016) identified four different combinations or models of this composition. These four models by Constantiou et al. (2016) are

referred to as Franchiser, Principal, Chaperone, and Gardener. Each model is classified in two dimensions—the level of control exerted by the platform owner over the platform participants (loose vs tight) and the intensity of competition among platform participants that the platform owner fosters (low vs high).

1) Franchiser (Tight Control-High Rivalry).

Franchiser is a model where the platform owner has absolute control and authority over all services, including the power to unilaterally determine prices for services and to change the algorithms used to calculate prices [25]. In simple terms, the Franchiser model has a characteristic in which the platform owner controls various aspects of the service including prices and standard services. Likewise, on the competition side between participants, they compete fiercely for projects or orders.

2) Chaperone (Loose Control - High Rivalry).

Chaperone is a model in which the role of the platform owner is to oversee the platform and market participants. Chaperone exercises loose control over platform participants and aims to organize their efforts. The Chaperone platform motivates high competition among participants from the supply side [25]. The Chaperone model sets standard prices and services. Thus, the level of competition among participants becomes high.

3) Principal (Tight Control – Low Rivalry).

Principal as the owner of the platform acts as a supervisor. A Principal has absolute control and authority over the platform and, in contrast to the Franchiser model, the Principal engages with supply-side participants by dictating the terms of short-term performance-based contracts. Principals apply strict controls and focus on standardizing service provision by enforcing rules and by monitoring supplier performance [25]. The principal also determines the price for the services provided. However, because the price is stable, the level of competition between participants is low.

4) Gardener (Loose Control – Low Rivalry).

Gardener is a model where platform owners empower the community by providing infrastructure with minimum standardization. Gardener provides loose control over participants and aims to regulate their efforts to self-regulate [25]. The Gardener Model allows participants and users to find their own way of determining prices and services. Therefore, the platform owner does not strictly control the Gardener and there is also no high level of competition.

3. Method

In this study, a research methodology should be needed as a scientific way to obtain data that will be used for research purposes. In accordance with its objectives, the study used qualitative-descriptive methods with a case study approach. According to Yin, case studies are identified in the contemporary context of real life, especially when it becomes the boundary between research and real conditions [26]. This study uses two data collection techniques of Interview. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with four key informants who were members of the organization. The informants were selected based on their expertise in this field, and they have to know about the communication strategy in Sociabuzz. These informants had the positions of (1) Campaign and Marketing Executive, (2) Strategic Planner, and (3) two Campaign Staff. The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles & Huberman consisting of three activities that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data exposure, and decision making/verification [27].

4. Results and Discussion

The main objective of this research is to analyse the marketing communication strategy implemented by Sociabuzz as one of the largest online marketplaces in Indonesia that focuses on providing intermediary platforms between creative talents and clients seeking their services. This form of business is an example of a business practice that has developed in the era of the sharing economy [28]. New business models like this rely on the use of various resources including physical, technological, and human resources together or in the principle of "sharing" [29]

The system applied in the business model in the era of sharing economy utilizes technological advances for various interests of individuals to organizations so that the distribution and distribution process of goods and services is available [30]. People who need products or services can connect and collaborate with other providers of these products/services through technology support, especially collaborative platforms [31]. In the business practices run by Sociabuzz, there is a main objective to bring together creative service providers with business people, both individuals and organizations who need certain creative works or services.

The sharing economy involves a collaborative process of production, distribution and consumption. In an online marketing process that has a collaborative principle, operational policies in an interactive platform are fundamental. Collaborative marketing can be defined as a marketing process that uses social media to support the creation of involvement in the buying and selling process through social interaction activities and user contributions [4]. In accordance with this principle Sociabuzz builds a platform that is able to facilitate users to interact, share and access information and portfolios, even make offers, deals and make transactions to monitor projects in one integrated platform.

To support the business processes carried out, Sociabuzz also develops a marketing communication strategy that is based on the principles of cooperation and collaboration. This strategy is based on the main goal of business: to empower talent & creativity for a better life. This business objective represents the awareness and approval of business people to realize the sharing economy as an ideal place for reconciliation of various passions and interests [32]. It also supports moral values regarding business that focus not only on the sharing of money, but on cooperation and generosity, mutual goods and services, mutual assistance, and on support for a moral economy which has a very different point of view from a market economy [21].

As a marketplace that focuses on connecting solutions between providers and users of creative services in the era of the sharing economy, Sociabuzz implements several important things in designing, implementing, controlling, and evaluating the marketing communication strategies carried out. Specifically, the marketing communication strategy prepared by Sociabuzz consists of eight important stages: situation analysis, identification of advantages, formulation of big ideas for campaigns, targeting, determining communication objectives, designing and implementing campaigns, budgeting, and campaign evaluation. What is interesting about each of these stages is that Sociabuzz strives to consider the interests of their partners and clients as important input.

Table 1. Sociabuzz Marketing Communication Strategy

Sociabuzz Marketing Communication Strategy							
Planning/Designing						**Implementing & controlling**	**Evaluating**
Situation Analysis	**Identification of Advantages**	**Formulation of Campaign Big Ideas**	**Targeting**	**Determining Communication Objective**	**Budgeting**	**Campaign Implementation**	**Campaign Evaluation**
Data and information collection: 1) Internal business environment, and 2) needs of partner (creative talents and service providers, user clients)	Identification of assets, specific supply and demands from partners and clients, collaborative opportunities	Generating big ideas from identified advantages, strength and opportunities	Selecting potential partners and clients who can be approached and empowered in various collaborative projects	Communication goals setting by identified opportunities and strength, focuses in encouraging collaborative projects between Partners – Sociabuzz – Clients, communication objectives is also formulated based on the marketing goal	Applying principle of efficiency and collaboration, by optimizing partners and clients' capitals e.g., communication channel for reducing media spending	Applying the collaborative principle by working with partners and clients for information dissemination and creating interaction, discussion, and also transaction between parties	Evaluation of public awareness and engagement using various online applications and platforms, regularly solicits input from partners and clients regarding all their communication efforts by conducting survey, interview and

							observation.

In the first stage, situation analysis, Sociabuzz makes efforts to collect data and information not only about the internal business environment, but also from the main needs of partners, i.e., creative workers and service providers, and also the needs of clients who need a variety of creative services for various interests. Sociabuzz builds and continues to develop this collaborative platform as a solution to the needs of their partners and clients. Through this platform, service providers and service seekers can meet, interact, and collaborate on various mutually beneficial projects.

In the second stage, identification of advantages, Sociabuzz makes the privileges of ability and the variety of services that partners can offer as their main advantages. In this case, partners are the main asset of Sociabuzz which is not only used for the company's economic interests, but also to empower them. Meanwhile, from the client side of service users, their need to find talented talents who can help them work on various projects is an opportunity that Sociabuzz is carefully targeting.

Sociabuzz's important strength has to do with the systems and platforms they have. The website built by Sociabuzz as the main platform is designed in such a way as to provide solutions to market needs. The basic function of the platform, namely as a media and contact point for providers and users of creative services, can be maximized with various features that allow users to interact, share and access information and portfolios, make offers, submit deals, and conduct transactions and monitor projects in integrated one platform.

Our strength is the number and variety of services offered by partners, to date there are more than 15,000 influencers join Sociabuzz and of course the number will continue to grow again, because every day there are new registrants. In addition, our platform provides complete features, service users can immediately search, view profiles, access portfolios, to transactions and monitor projects. This is not owned by competitors. (Personal Communication, Informant 2)

The advantages gained from collaborative resources from partners and clients are always big ideas, which are structured as the third step in every marketing communication campaign they carry out through various platforms, both online and offline. The opportunities faced by Sociabuzz are closely related to increasing needs from two sides, users of creative services and service providers. The development of the digital marketing industry encourages a massive increase in the needs of business people for talent and creative works. Meanwhile, from the service provider side, selling services and works are also some of the big challenges in this era of competition. These challenges are mainly related to the difficulty of service providers in meeting clients, delivering portfolios, submitting bids to making project agreements. Sociabuzz carefully makes these market needs their business advantage. Therefore, this advantage has always become a big idea in every marketing communication campaign that they carry out through various platforms, both online and offline.

The opportunities come from two sides, namely from the side of service users and from the side of influencers or talents. From the client side, the growing demand for various creative services and influencers continues to increase, while from the service provider side, the number continues to increase and they have a need to be mediated with potential clients. (Personal Communication, Informant 1)

The results of advantages identification process also provide input on Sociabuzz's position in the market, especially as a marketplace for providing services and creative work in Indonesia. From the results of the brand positioning analysis, a marketing communication plan can be developed on the direction and objectives of the campaign (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). The marketing cycle can also be built based on these positioning parameters which are targeted at specific individuals or a more specific sub-set of markets, who are expected to receive, understand, like and follow the directions conveyed in various marketing communication messages (Royle & Laing, 2014). This target is known as the target audience.

The next stage is the targeting stage. Identification anda determination of the target audience is the next important step taken by Sociabuzz after identifying the advantages and formulating big ideas. Sociabuzz makes partners and clients as the targets or preferred audiences of the communication activities carried out. Without setting too narrow boundaries, Sociabuzz targets all

service providers and creative service users as potential partners and clients who can be approached and empowered in various collaborative projects.

In this stage Sociabuzz divides two main target audience groups, i.e., groups of service providers and groups of service users. Service providers who are the target audience of every marketing communication campaign carried out are talents, i.e., freelancers who have competencies related to influencer services such as Celebrity Programs, Bloggers, Buzzers, and Youtubers. In addition, Sociabuzz website is also plays an important roles as a showroom and promotional media for other service providers such as writers, photographers, videographers, makeup artists, singers, bands, DJs, speakers, MCs, stand-up comedians to models. Meanwhile, service users or users can be business owners, brand managers, organizations, institutions, community groups, to individuals who need creative services that can be performed or created by various talents who are members of Sociabuzz partners. In identifying this target audience, Sociabuzz does not limit itself to geographical and demographic aspects of the target, but focuses on the target's needs and proximity to communication and information technology, especially the internet.

Geographically, you can say that from Sabang-Merauke all of that can be a Sociabuzz audience because basically Sociabuzz prioritizes platform and digitization. So, both in terms of service providers and users, all who have needs related to this industry, they are all the target audience for Sociabuzz. (Personal Communication, Informant 1)

After the targeting effort has been agreed upon, the next step in the preparation of a marketing communication strategy is the formulation of communication objectives. The purpose of this communication must be clear, measurable and achievable. At the stage of determining communication objectives, Sociabuzz considers the potential partners and clients it has. For example, in 2019, Sociabuzz has a communication objective to support the achievement of "10,000 jobs done". From this objective, it can be seen that Sociabuzz focuses in encouraging collaborative projects from the effective use of resources owned by both parties. Further, a communication objective is formulated based on the marketing goal, i.e. to gain awareness of the target audience, and encourage target audiences to join and become Sociabuzz partners, both as service providers/talents, as well as users.

Furthermore, in the budgeting stage, Sociabuzz applies the efficiency principle that is very important in start-up business practice. The collaboration principle that underlies the entire Sociabuzz business principles then becomes an important factor in the cost efficiency efforts undertaken. This is mainly due to the sharing principle that Sociabuzz, partners and clients run, so that it is possible for Sociabuzz to run a business by utilizing the resources owned and shared by partners and clients. One of the most important strategies in this marketing communication strategy is that partners are willing to take advantage of the access and networks they have, especially in social media, to spread information about Sociabuzz and collaborative projects that have the potential to benefit all parties. In this case, Sociabuzz encourages partners to 'make conversation' about Sociabuzz on their social media accounts so that the goals related to Sociabuzz's visibility and awareness can be achieved maximally but with an efficient budget. For partners, this effort also provides benefits for them, because potential service users can get information that they can “meet” and cooperate with talents and creative service providers easily and safely through the platform provided by Sociabuzz.

For a start-up business, cost efficiency is an important issue that must be considered carefully. For us, the use of all available channels, both from companies and from partners, is a valuable option so that these efficiency goals can be achieved (Personal Communication, Informant 1).

Marketing communication strategies and tactics are prepared and implemented systematically by Sociabuzz. At this stage, the media, contact points, promotional messages and campaign methods are determined. For the implementation phase of the Sociabuzz campaign, they apply the collaborative principle by working with partners to maximize the various social media platforms owned by partners to participate in campaigning for the services and competencies they offer on the Sociabuzz platform. Most of the partners are creative workers who have accounts on various social media platforms that have the potential to get a wide but specific reach. In fact, many clients of potential service users have managed to find information about Sociabuzz as an effective intermediary platform through the partners' social media accounts.

Even though Sociabuzz runs a business that is almost entirely dependent on communication technology and internet networks, campaign implementation is still carried out by integrating online and offline platforms. Online campaigns are carried out through social media advertising, especially through Instagram Ads and endorsements, with consideration of the massive use of Instagram for various purposes, especially marketing interests in Indonesia and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) with the consideration that active search through search engines is Sociabuzz's contact point with the target audience. What is interesting, Sociabuzz does not limit itself to online campaigns only, offline campaigns are carried out, including sales promotions, which are activated through personal selling activities as well as campaigns through out-of-home advertising and events.

Online and offline approaches have their own privileges, various tactics and online communication activities have become imperative, because the basis of this business is also very dependent on technology and networks, but it cannot be denied that offline channels and activities also give positive results. For a relatively new business like what we do, sometimes it takes a lot of explanation and face-to-face two-way discussions so that the information needs of our target audience can be met (Personal Communication, Informant 3)

Finally, evaluation is an important stage that can be carried out simultaneously with the campaign implementation stage. At the campaign evaluation stage, Sociabuzz team regularly monitors the various impacts and successes of each campaign carried out. In the online campaign evaluation process, various applications that measure engagement rates are used, for example using Google Analytics and Facebook Analytics. Meanwhile, offline campaigns are measured primarily by surveys and the number of transactions generated from each offline campaign activity. In addition, Sociabuzz also digs up insights from partners on a regular basis as an effort to evaluate the campaign, either by interview or by direct observation.

Sociabuzz does not only focus on awareness and the level of public engagement in each campaign that is carried out. In this case, Sociabuzz also regularly solicits input from partners and clients regarding all their communication efforts. Extracting input is important considering that partners and clients are important assets in this collaborative business practice, and their opinions must always be scrutinized. So far, Sociabuzz has been seeking input from partners and clients through interviews and observations.

5. Conclusion

The marketing communication strategy carried out by Sociabuzz as one of the top creators & talent marketplaces in Indonesia is carried out in eight important stages: environmental analysis, identification of advantages, formulation of big ideas for campaigns, targeting, determining communication objectives, budgeting, campaigns implementation, and evaluation. All these stages are based on the main business goal, i.e. "To empower talent & creativity for a better life". The principles of sharing economy, especially those related to the principles of partnership, empowerment, and collaborative efforts, not only underlie Sociabuzz's business processes and strategies, but also form the basis of their marketing communication strategies. As a business that holds the principle of people for people. Sociabuzz also makes the needs of partners a big idea and the core message of all marketing communication campaigns that are carried out. As a new form of business that prioritizes the principle of sharing economy, marketplaces, especially those included in the people-based marketplace category, opportunities to apply the principles of partnership and collaboration can be utilized to build not only business goals and strategies, but can also be applied in the formulation and implementation of communication strategies. marketing. By utilizing the principles of partnership and collaboration, business players in the marketplace industry can get various benefits for long-term business. These advantages can be in the form of insights for strategy development, additional important resources for marketing communication activities, especially from support and mutual relationships with partners, as well as cost efficiency which is important to support sustainable business processes. For future recommendations, marketing communication strategy models formulated from the findings of scientific research need to be continuously developed. Therefore, this model can be used as a reference for start-up business actors, especially those engaged in the people-based marketplace to build a marketing communication strategy that is suitable for implementation in unique business opportunities and challenges.

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