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The Exploitation of Women in Marketing Communications: Strategies for Beginner Entrepreneurs in Gender Literacy Social Media Brand

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the exploitation of women in marketing communications and new entrepreneurial strategies for building brand awareness through social media that are more sensitive to gender issues. Social media has become an important platform in marketing communications, enabling customer interaction, building brands, and creating brand awareness. However, there is a phenomenon of exploitation of women in marketing strategies on social media that reinforces gender stereotypes and ignores important issues that affect women. This study uses the literature study method by analyzing 63 journal articles to understand better women's exploitation in business communication and the importance of gender-aware entrepreneurial strategies in building brand awareness through social media. In this study, it was found that novice entrepreneurs must adopt strategies that are gender literate in building brand awareness through social media. This strategy involves using inclusive language, eliminating gender stereotypes in content, and promoting gender equality and diversity in business communications. Through the use of social media that is more sensitive to gender issues, a more inclusive, equal, and fair business environment can be created without reinforcing gender stereotypes and discrimination.

Keywords: Exploitation of Women, Social Media, Beginner Entrepreneurs, Brand Awareness.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan eksplotasi perempuan dalam komunikasi pemasaran oleh wirausahawan baru dalam membentuk brand awareness melalui media sosial yang lebih peka terhadap isu-isu gender. Media sosial telah menjadi platform penting dalam komunikasi pemasaran yang memungkinkan interaksi dengan pelanggan, membangun dan menciptakan kesadaran merk. Namun, fenomena eksplotasi perempuan dalam strategi pemasaran media sosial memperkuat stereotip gender dan mengabaikan isu penting yang mempengaruhi perempuan. Studi ini menggunakan metode studi literatur dengan menganalisis 63 artikel jurnal untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang eksplotasi perempuan dalam komunikasi pemasaran dan pentingnya strategi wirausaha yang melek gender dalam membentuk *brand awareness* media sosial. Dalam kajian ini, ditemukan bahwa wirausahawan pemula harus mengadopsi strategi yang melek gender dalam membentuk brand awareness melalui media sosial, dengan melibatkan penggunaan bahasa yang inklusif, penghapusan stereotip gender dalam konten, serta dukungan terhadap kesetaraan gender dan keberagaman dalam komunikasi bisnis. Kemudian lingkungan bisnis dapat menjadi lebih inklusif, setara, dan adil tanpa memperkuat stereotip dan diskriminasi gender.

Kata Kunci: Eksplotasi Perempuan, Media Sosial, Wirausahan Pemula, Brand Awareness

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INTRODUCTION

In marketing communications, social media provides a broad platform for interacting with customers, promoting products or services, building brands, and creating brand awareness. One of the main strengths of social media is its ability to reach a large and heterogeneous audience. With an ever-increasing number of social media users, businesses have direct access and connect business connectivity worldwide (Arnaboldi & Diaz Lema, 2022; Cooper et al., 2023; Himelboim & Golan, 2023; Liadeli et al., 2023). Therefore, it opens the possibility for a wider-reaching message to echo to audiences through traditional channels such as television (Pramesthi & Prasetyo, 2023) or print advertisements (Abell & Biswas, 2023).

Technology acceleration has led all entrepreneurial actions to depend on various new tools and platforms. In this context, social media is considered a technological medium that enables two-way interactions between businesses and customers. Entrepreneurial activities in the business corridor can use social media to listen to real-time customer feedback, questions, and complaints. It allows new entrepreneurs to respond quickly and provide better customer service. These interactions can also help in building stronger relationships between businesses and customers, which in turn can increase customer loyalty (Abell & Biswas, 2023; Pramesthi & Prasetyo, 2023). So that new entrepreneurs can compete on par with entrepreneurs who have started a business before.

Social media enables businesses to conduct market research effectively as part of technology acceleration. By monitoring and analysing data and trends related to the behaviors of social media users, businesses can gain valuable insights into the preferences and needs of their customers. This information can be used to develop more effective marketing strategies and products better suited to the market (Eka Putra et al., 2022; Widayati et al., 2021). In addition, social media provides an opportunity for businesses to build their brand more personally and humanly. Businesses can showcase their brand personality through engaging and relevant content and engage in stories that inspire and influence audiences. In this context, social media also allows businesses to promote social values and support issues important to their audience, such as environmental or social issues.

From several previous studies, the research gap that emerged was that most of the research on gender and marketing communications focused on large companies and in developed countries. This phenomenon also does not refer to the form of gender concept literacy in every business communication action in an environment with a smaller company scope. Likewise, the type of exploitation expressed is still general in nature.

This study focuses on the exploitation of women in business communication and new entrepreneurial strategies for building brand awareness through social media that are more sensitive to gender issues. The exploitation of women is a phenomenon that still occurs in various sectors, including in the business realm.

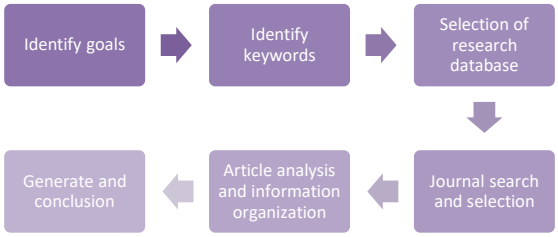
Women often face stereotypes (Ramos et al., 2022), discrimination (Varghese & Kumar, 2022), or exploitation in efforts to promote certain products or brands (Salmen & Dhont, 2023). With its wide reach and ability to influence public opinion, social media provides a great opportunity for entrepreneurs to build brand awareness.

Too often, however, the strategies used in social media contain a gender bias that reinforces stereotypes and ignores important issues affecting women. In previous studies, acts of exploitation of women in building brand awareness by new businesspeople were used as a shortcut to increase sales and instil a brand in society. For example, businesses use women's stories or testimonials that portray them as breakable objects or in need of male protection (Olsson & Bernhard, 2021); as sexually attractive objects for promotion (Drake & Radford, 2021); images of women that only focus on beauty (de Lenne et al., 2021), physical appearance (López Jiménez et al., 2021), and myths (Qiao & Wang, 2022). In detail, the description above still does not use the identification of gender bias based on subordination and stereotypes and even the marginalization of women in exploitation in business communications.

Therefore, it is important to explore new entrepreneurial strategies that are more gender-aware in building brand awareness through social media. This strategy should include using inclusive language, eliminating gender stereotypes in images and content, and supporting gender equality and diversity in all aspects of business communication. Through this study, a better understanding of the exploitation of women in business communication can be created, as well as the importance of gender-aware entrepreneurial strategies in building brand awareness through social media. By paying attention to gender issues in business communications, we can create a more inclusive, equal, and fair environment for everyone without reinforcing gender stereotypes and discrimination.

METHOD

Initially, the articles collected on similar topics amounted to 112 manuscripts. This study uses the literature study method by reviewing and analysing as many as 63 journal articles. Journal sources in detail consist of reputable international journals, international journals, and accredited national journals. Data grouping is done by grouping the types of articles by topic and year. The analysis was carried out according to topic clusters according to the sub-themes that became the research framework. The aim is to get answers to digital transformation in public management and information.



Source: Dekker et al., 2020; Reis et al., 2019

Figure 1. Literature Review Research Steps

The method combines several literature review models (Dekker et al., 2020; Reis et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). First, research trends and comparisons of previous studies are emphasized in identifying research objectives. Second, the activity of identifying keywords by making a list of keywords that are relevant to the topic. This keyword is used in the search for journals that match the topic. Third, selecting a research database to search for relevant journals, namely using Google Scholar. Fourth, the journal search begins by using the previously identified keywords, further, it is carried out in the framework of selection based on the criteria. Fifth, the analysis of the article began to be carried out in detail by paying attention to the main findings, the methodology used, the theoretical framework, and the resulting conclusions. Finally, the research generates a method to conclude the concept based on evidence.

DISCUSSION

Utilization of Social Media Technology and Gender Literacy by Beginner Entrepreneurs

Technology acceleration impacts technology, where social media is becoming more dominant in all aspects of life. Social media is a media with its ecosystem to develop and create social change. On the other hand, the field of entrepreneurship today is very much dominated and even dependent on social media. Ecosystem development is considered more massive using social media as an implication of the global village concept (Ilori et al., 2022; Mamman et al., 2023; Sheth, 2020), which shortens space and time. Even more extreme, social media is considered to open new business opportunities, giving rise to new entrepreneurs.

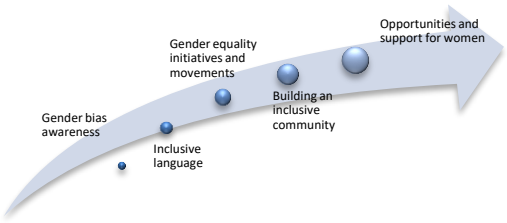
However, social media technology does not necessarily only generate positive waves while developing entrepreneurship in Indonesia. On the contrary, this opens opportunities for social deviations in implementing business communication. Beginner entrepreneurs who appear in Indonesia can be categorized as young, productive, and technologically literate. From this opportunity, challenges also arise regarding gender equality in using social media to produce promotional content. The competition by novice entrepreneurs becomes intense to form brand awareness for their products.

Based on a cliché problem in business communication, women are used as objects for body exploitation and various social roles in increasing product sales. This method is generally considered very effective for creating brand awareness and increasing product sales. Even though this action has been carried out for decades, it is still very relevant to be adopted today. There have been many women activists, and even criticism has come from women who are aware of their role regarding the discrepancy between the content of advertisements and the visualization of women (Schouten et al., 2020; Shoenberger et al., 2020). This exploitation highlight is still widely adopted today, and many testify to greatly influence product displays to develop entrepreneurial activities among beginners.

Several similar cases also occurred in several countries in various parts of the world's continents. For example, to improve the product, in China, advertisements for exploiting women's bodies are exposed on television (Gan & Chen, 2023). In East Asia and India, part of South Asia has experienced the same thing where the TikTok business context once exposed women excessively to instil product values in society (Siddegowda et al., 2023). An imprecise correlation was also found in Australia, where the content of advertisements and products did not match the visualization of exploitative women (Lata et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the case in the United States has similarities, namely the use of women in advertisements (Elliott & Elliott, 2005). Still, the content context does not match the depiction of women's actions carried out in them. It doesn't only happen in developing countries; in Africa (Shabangu et al., 2022), to be precise, also experience similar things, where women also often experience exploitation when on display to become advertising models that expose more beauty and body than the essence of the product.

Nonetheless, there are advertisements in various countries that adhere to the value of respecting gender equality in practice. For example, in South Korea (Kavenagh et al., 2023), not only women are used to representing beauty, but men are also often involved. In Indonesia, several incidents are contextualized in displaying products. For example, perfume advertisements (Fitriani et al., 2021), which usually use women, this time directly use men as representations of masculinity. In the UK (Atkinson et al., 2022), there has also been an advertisement that presents products as they are without using the value of women's exploitation to attract and entice buyers.

Such conditions are also influenced by the perspective of advertisers and ad orderers to construct product value. Novice entrepreneurs must combine social media technology and gender literacy not to reap controversy and instil values that are irrelevant to reality (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Gender mainstreaming in Indonesia is the basis for not violating the rights of women or men in social, political, cultural, and other aspects. Several concepts that must be possessed by young entrepreneurs in order to remain within good limits in mainstreaming gender in the field of entrepreneurship are to place a value on gender literacy.



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2023

Figure 1. The Concept of Gender Mainstreaming in Beginner Entrepreneurs in Forming Brand Awareness

First, the attitude of being aware of gender bias in content where novice entrepreneurs can use gender literacy to realize and avoid gender bias in the content they share through social media (Jung et al., 2022; Moloney & Mitchell, 2022). They can ensure their content does not reinforce gender

stereotypes that harm women or ignore their roles and contributions in various fields.

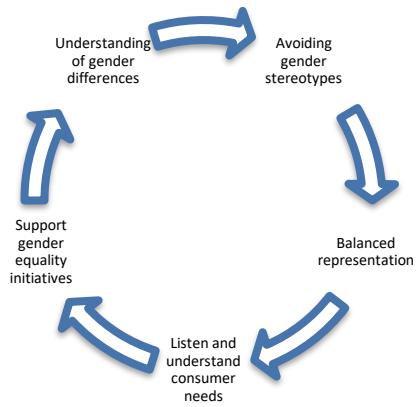
Second, the subject of novice entrepreneurs uses inclusive language (Smith & Bamberger, 2021; Tordoff et al., 2021). This action can be taken by paying attention to using inclusive language in communication on social media. Avoiding using words or phrases that denigrate or reinforce gender differences, as well as using gender-neutral pronouns, are important steps in building a more positive gender awareness.

Third, actions to support gender equality initiatives and movements (Guthridge et al., 2022; Shapiro et al., 2022) can be carried out by novice entrepreneurs through the use of social media platforms to support initiatives and movements that fight for gender equality. They can share information on relevant gender issues, promote organizations or projects that empower women, and amplify women's voices who have succeeded in business.

Fourth, building an inclusive community (de Graaf et al., 2022; Francis et al., 2023): Through social media, budding entrepreneurs can form an inclusive community where all members feel heard, valued and supported, regardless of gender. They can encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange involving women and men and ensure balanced representation in community events or activities.

Fifth, provide opportunities and support for women where novice entrepreneurs can use social media to provide opportunities and support for women in the business world (Ayatakshi-Endow & Steele, 2021; Rezaei-Moghaddam et al., 2023). They can share relevant resources, information, or training to help women develop business skills and opportunities. In addition, they can also promote women's businesses and connect them with wider networks and opportunities.

By utilizing social media technology and understanding gender literacy, novice entrepreneurs can play a role in building a more inclusive and equal business environment. Such steps can contribute to addressing gender inequality and creating a more just space for women in the business world. Gender literacy in business promotion is about having a deep understanding of gender roles and influences in the context of business marketing and communications (Hudders & De Jans, 2022; Leal Filho et al., 2022). It involves awareness of gender gaps, gender stereotypes and issues related to gender equality in business promotion. The steps adopted from the gender mainstreaming movement can be adopted for using technology by novice entrepreneurs in forming brand awareness.



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2023

Figure 2. The steps of the gender

mainstreaming movement in the use of technology by novice

First, understand gender differences (Lin & Wang, 2020; Lopez-Nicolas et al., 2020): It is important to have a deep understanding of gender differences and how these differences can influence consumers' preferences, needs, and perceptions. It allows businesses to develop relevant messages and promotional strategies that respect gender diversity. *Second,* the act of avoiding gender stereotypes (Mui et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2021) because gender stereotypes can affect the way we perceive the roles and abilities of individuals based on their gender. In business promotion, it is important to avoid using gender stereotypes that reduce or limit the roles of women or men. Instead, promote gender equality and reinforce inclusive messages.

The next sequence is *third,* in business promotion content, it creates a balanced representation to reflect gender equality and diversity (Ali et al., 2022; Noronha et al., 2022). Use images, videos, or testimonials that represent different genders and depict women and men in strong, professional, diverse roles. This move helps create an inclusive environment and build connections with a wider audience. Things that correlate are in fourth place; novice entrepreneurs listen to and understand consumer needs. Gender roles in consumer purchases and preferences can differ. In business promotion, it is important to listen to and understand the needs and desires of consumers from various gender backgrounds. Conducting market research, conducting surveys, and interacting with customers can help identify their preferences so that businesses can develop more effective promotional campaigns.

Finally, supporting gender equality initiatives determines the internalization of values in entrepreneurial activities (Kryeziu et al., 2022). In business promotion, getting involved in initiatives and movements that fight for gender equality can help build a positive brand image and gain support from consumers who share similar values. For example, getting involved in campaigns or donating part of sales revenue to organizations fighting for gender equality. By becoming gender literate in business promotions, businesses can create an inclusive climate, broaden their customer base, and build stronger consumer relationships. It is also an important step towards a more just and equal society from a gender perspective.

Social Media Technology as a New Power in Forming Brand Awareness

New media, such as social media and digital platforms, strongly correlate with building brand awareness. In an era where almost everyone is connected to the internet and using social media, these platforms provide entrepreneurs a great opportunity to reach a wider audience and build awareness about their product or service. Social media technology has become a significant new force in building brand awareness (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2022).

The output of a wide range in a heterogeneous area is a new force to get a lot of attention and wide.

How social media works as a product of technology and contributes to marketing communications involves several aspects. A broad global reach makes social media enable entrepreneurial activities to reach a global audience instantly. With billions of active users on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, businesses have direct access to potential markets worldwide. It provides an opportunity to expand brand reach and reach audiences that were previously difficult to reach through traditional channels.

Meanwhile, businesses can interact directly with customers through closer interaction and engagement through social media. It can be ensured that activities create opportunities to build closer relationships and engage with audiences. Clichéd marketing communications activities can be replaced by answering questions, responding to feedback, and engaging in conversations that lead to stronger and more sustainable customer relationships. Besides that, visually appealing content on social media provides an ideal platform for sharing content. Images and videos can increase brand awareness in creative and engaging ways. Through attractive images and short videos, businesses can capture attention and increase brand retention among their audience (Shankar et al., 2022).

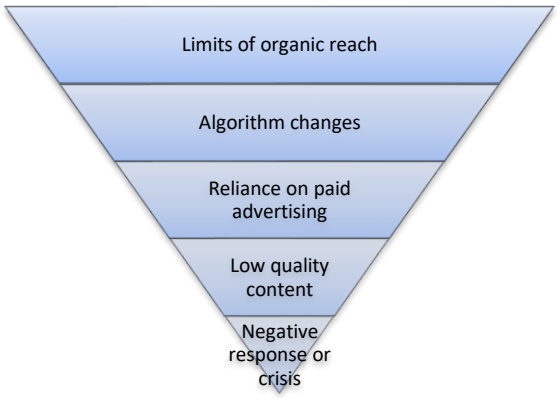
Opportunities for sharing and virality are factors that novice entrepreneurs have been waiting for to boost the popularity of their products. Social media allows content to quickly go viral if it catches attention and appeals to the audience. If brand content successfully attracts social media users' attention and is considered valuable, they are more likely to share that content with their environment. This condition creates the exponential potential to increase brand awareness quickly.

In addition, more effective targeting and analysis needs to be done. Social media platforms provide powerful tools for ad targeting and in-depth analysis. Businesses can direct their ads to the right audience based on demographics, interests, or behaviour, increasing the effectiveness of their brand awareness campaigns (Dehdashti et al., 2022). Furthermore, social media data analysis provides valuable insights into content performance and audience response, enabling businesses to optimize their strategy.

By leveraging the power of social media technology, businesses have an extraordinary opportunity to increase their brand awareness. In an era where social media users are increasingly active and connected, effectively leveraging these platforms can be a key factor in building a strong and well-known brand. Even though social media technology has many advantages in building brand awareness, some obstacles can be faced in its use.

Based on the analysis of the technological situation in the frame of social media as a marketing communication support tool, the obstacles in implementing brand

awareness formation can be explained. Limitations of organic reach can be raised as a constraint. Although social media provides the potential for a broad reach, platform algorithms often need to improve the organic reach of content. Not all followers or social media users will naturally see brand content in their feeds. It means businesses must compete with much other content for users' attention.



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2023

Figure 3. Factors constraining the implementation of gender literacy in forming brand awareness.

Changes to social media algorithms change frequently (Tong et al., 2022), which can impact how brand content is displayed and distributed to users. These changes can affect the visibility and reach of brand content, requiring businesses to keep abreast of and adapt their strategies to stay relevant and visible on social media platforms. In addition, the reliance on paid advertising is a real constraint on implementation. With a larger audience and increased brand awareness, businesses often rely on paid social media advertising (Widuri & Dewi, 2023). It can be challenging for budding entrepreneurs or businesses with limited budgets, as paid advertising can require significant additional costs to achieve the desired reach.

Activity to compete and attract the attention of social media users, some businesses may produce low-quality content or content irrelevant to their brand. Such content can damage the brand image and cause users to lose interest or trust in the brand so that it can continue to create negative responses or crises in entrepreneurial activities. Social media can also be a sensitive field where brand issues or crises can quickly spread and affect brand awareness. Criticism or negative responses from users can easily spread virally, causing a tarnished brand reputation. Dealing with a crisis or negative response on social media requires fast and effective monitoring and response. Despite these constraints, it is important to remember that social media technology is still a powerful tool for building brand awareness (Aditi et al., 2023). By understanding these constraints and taking appropriate action, businesses can optimize their use of social media to build strong brands and increase their brand awareness.

Brand Awareness, Social Media Technology, and Exploitation of Women

Brand awareness can be associated with the public's awareness and recognition of a brand. Social media technology has become very effective in shaping and increasing brand awareness. Through social media platforms,

businesses can reach a wider audience globally, interact directly with customers, and produce engaging content to increase brand understanding and recognition. However, in the context of the Exploitation of women, it should be noted that social media can also be a place for exploitative practices that harm women. For example, in advertisements or promotional content, women are sometimes portrayed in demeaning stereotypes or use sexual objectification for promotional purposes. It can contribute to the Exploitation of women and perpetuate gender inequality.

Therefore, businesses and marketers need to have high gender awareness and consider the impact of their content and promotion strategy (Mathew & Soliman, 2021). Beginning entrepreneurs must ensure that the brand awareness they build through social media does not contain Exploitation of women and can promote gender equality and a positive image of women. In other words, social media technology can be a powerful tool for creating brand awareness that is sinless or free from the Exploitation of women. It is important to harness the power of social media responsibly, promote inclusive messages, strengthen balanced representation, and avoid harmful or exploitative practices against women.

Meanwhile, the exploitation of women in building brand awareness can be underlined as a real problem and often occurs in various contexts. The context of the meaning of exploitation in technology-based marketing communications for novice entrepreneurs also correlates with the implementation of gender equality values in forming brand awareness. Objectification (Hollett et al., 2020), women are often exploited by being sexually objectified or used in provocative images or content to attract attention or promote certain products or brands. For example, the use of pictures of women in

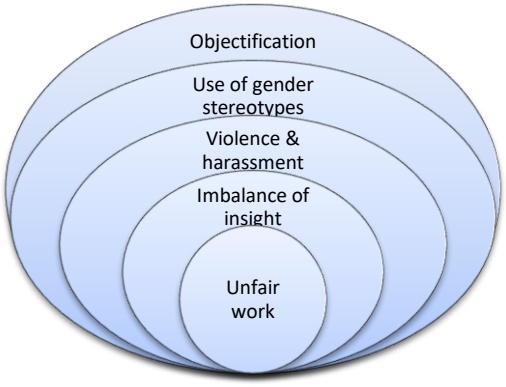
Table 1. Comparison of Literature Review in Any Aspects

Sub-topic	Sources
Stereotype	Arnaboldi., & Diaz Lema (2022); Atkinson et al., (2022); Elliott, & Elliott (2005); Francis et al., (2023); Ilori et al., (2022); Lopez-Nicolas et al., (2020); Lucka et al., (2021); Olsson., & Bernhard (2021); Rezaei-Moghaddam et al., (2023); Smith., & Bamberger (2021); Tordoff et al. (2021); Zhao., & Ellenwood (2021).
Subordination	Ali et al., (2022); Cooper et al., (2023); Dworkin et al., (2020); Hollett et al., (2020); Kryeziu et al., (2022); Lin., & Wang (2020); López Jiménez et al., (2021); Mui et al., (2022); Noronha et al., (2022); Ramos et al., (2022); Salmen., & Dhont (2023); Shapiro et al., (2022).
Exploitation	Ayatakshi-Endow., & Steele (2021); de Lenne et al., (2021); Drake., & Radford, (2021); Filice et al (2022); Fitriani et al., (2021); Gan., & Chen (2023); Himelboim., & Golan (2023); Hudders., & De Jans (2022); Kavenagh et al., (2023); Moloney., & Mitchell (2022); Qiao, & Wang (2022); Schouten et al., (2020); Shabangu et al., (2022); Shoenberger, et al., (2020); Siddegowda et al., (2023); Varghese., & Kumar (2022).
Awerness	Abell., & Biswas (2023); Aditi et al., (2023); de Graaf et al.,(2022); Dehdashti et al., (2022); Dekker et al., (2020); Eka et al., (2022); Guthridge et al., (2022); Jung et al., (2022); Lata, et al., (2023); Leal Filho et al., (2022); Liadeli et al., (2023); Mamman et al., (2023); Mathew., & Soliman (2021); Olanrewaju et al., (2020); Oliveira., & Fernandes (2022); Pramesthi., & Prasetyo (2023); Reis et al., (2019); Shankar et al., (2022); Sheth (2020).; Tong et al., (2022); Wang, H., Xiong et al., (2018). Widayati et al., (2021); Widuri., & Dewi (2023).

Source: Data Researcher, 2023

ways that depict them in excessively sexualized positions or clothing without considering women's dignity and independence.

Use of gender stereotypes in some brands to build brand awareness (Lucka et al., 2021), which often exploits women. An example is reinforcing images of women that only focus on beauty, physical appearance, or traditional roles such as mother or wife while ignoring the achievements and potential of women in other fields. Meanwhile, the context of violence and harassment occurred in several cases. Brand awareness campaigns involve the use of violence or harassment against women. For example, advertisements that use sexual violence, threats, or verbal harassment as a form of controversial content to attract attention, regardless of the negative impact on women (Filice et al., 2022).



Source: Data processed by researchers, 2023

Figure 4. The context of the meaning of exploitation in building brand awareness on social media

Imbalance of insight in marketing communications using women's stories or testimonials (Dworkin et al., 2020) that portray them as breakable objects or in need of male protection to achieve success or happiness. It reduces women to individuals who are not independent and unable to overcome challenges or achieve their goals. Likewise, with the concept of unfair work for women. In certain industries, especially those related to beauty or fashion, women are often exploited through unfair working conditions, including low wages, excessive working hours, or lack of adequate work rights. It harms women directly and damages the image of brands that want to build positive brand awareness. It is important to recognize that the exploitation of women in building brand awareness is not a generally expected or accepted practice. There is a shift towards a more inclusive approach, which considers the values of gender equality, diversity, and respect for the dignity and human rights of women.

CONCLUSION

This study synthesises four main concepts: marketing communications, young entrepreneurs, gender literacy and brand awareness. To understand thoroughly, we can see several concepts of gender mainstreaming in novice entrepreneurs in forming brand awareness. These related concepts include gender bias awareness, inclusive language, gender equality initiatives and movements, building an inclusive community, and opportunities and support for women. So, realising the formation of brand awareness requires steps to avoid gender stereotypes, balanced representation, listen and

understanding consumer needs, support gender equality initiatives, and understand gender differences. Based on the analysis of the technological situation in the frame of social media as a marketing communication support tool, the constraints in its implementation can be explained. A clear concept is needed to avoid gender-biased actions, especially in the context of the exploitation of women when promoting products. Obstacles that must be avoided include gender-biased objectives, the involvement of stereotyped concepts in product displays, violence, and harassment both directly and indirectly, imbalance of insight, and depictions of unfair work against women.

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