

Exploring the role of pageant influencers on social media campaign in Indonesia

Chelsea Terenzia^{1*}, Sari Ramadanty¹

¹ Bina Nusantara University, Banten 15143, Indonesia

*Corresponding author's email: chelsea.terenzia@binus.ac.id

Abstract

As a Pageant Influencers in communication has grown increasingly significant, serving as key figures in digital marketing and attracting audiences on social media platforms. This study explores the role of Pageant Influencers in digital campaign activities in Indonesia. The research employed a qualitative method through semi-structured interviews method with 15 pageant influencers involved in digital campaigns by making video content on their social media accounts. This study follows Miles and Huberman's (1984) three-stage data analysis: Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing. Based on the analysis of interview results, there are three types of campaigns: Culture, Promotion, and Education. By utilizing Instagram and TikTok as platforms, the message goals of these campaigns are both informational and persuasive. Pageant Influencers, classified as nano-, micro-, and macro-influencers, is a channel for advocacy in social media campaigns. Their role is to increase awareness, engagement, and inspire audiences.

Keywords

Campaign, Social media, Influencer, Pageant, Role

Introduction

Beauty pageants, known as beauty contests, are a recent phenomenon in Indonesia that has captured the attention of Indonesian society. A pageant can be interpreted as a competition where participants, both female and male, are judged based on their physical appearance. However, in its development, many other aspects are evaluated in beauty pageants, such as public speaking, advocacy, and catwalk skills [1].

The first known international beauty pageant was Miss Universe. Miss Universe began after Yolanda Betbeze, a model, refused to wear a swimsuit made by Pacific Knitting Mills in the Miss America 1951 pageant [2]. This decision prompted Pacific Knitting Mills to organize their beauty contest, known as Miss Universe [3]. Since then, the competition has grown rapidly, attracting nearly 100 contestants from around the world and remaining popular to this day [4].

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In Indonesia, Puteri Indonesia and Miss Indonesia are two beauty pageants that are similarly well-regarded in terms of popularity and reach, as their winners have the opportunity to compete internationally. Pageant contests both domestically and internationally always receive special attention, especially from pageant lovers or their followers [5].

In Indonesia itself, numerous national-scale pageant contests are regularly held, starting from Miss Indonesia, Puteri Indonesia, Putri Wisata Indonesia, Miss Earth Indonesia, Putri Kebaya Indonesia, Miss Celebrity Indonesia, Mister Supranational, Mister Global, Putri Muslimah Indonesia, Miss Chinese Indonesia, Miss Jakarta Fair, Abang Nene Indonesia, Koko Cici Indonesia, and other pageant contests [6].

Not only national-level beauty pageants, but universities also organize events to elect campus ambassadors to have campus representatives, as well as the ability to stimulate student creativity and create a vibrant atmosphere on campus [7]. Due to the development of time and technological advancements, the pageant industry has begun to expand into social media [8].

The use of social media progresses rapidly over time. In fact, people can become widely known to the public in a short period, sometimes within moments. Social media holds significant power and plays a specific role in shaping someone's personal branding, where what one portrays on social media generates their identity and self-representation [9].

The ease of creating content on social media and the high income from each social media upload make the current generation consider influencer work as a promising profession while still keeping up with the times. In today's society, social networks provide a space for self-awareness by sharing their interests, thoughts, and even lifestyle, and all this changes the way of communication [10].

This also attracted the attention of the pageants industry, by holding pageant elections by utilizing social media. Since then, the ambassadors are not only known as beauty pageants but also known as pageant influencers. Beauty pageants that previously we could only see on television, now we can see various very interesting digital campaign video content on pageant influencer's social media accounts [11].

Advancements in technology and social media have driven beauty pageants to create engaging video content, attracting the millennial generation, who increasingly spend time accessing and enjoying content from influencers [12]. Social media, through collaboration with influencers, has become a powerful medium for advertising and personal branding [9].

Indonesia, the fourth most populous country in the world with 268 million people and 150 million active social media users, is one of the most important markets for digital marketers in Southeast Asia [13]. Around 60% of Indonesians access the internet using smartphones, indicating that over half the population is internet users [14]. The

influence of social media has encouraged beauty pageants to voice their influence on social media, which has ultimately led to the emergence of pageant influencers [15].

The term “Pageant Influencer” emerged because of technological developments that affect the ambassadors called beauty pageants. “Pageant Influencer” came from the combination of two words, namely “Pageant” and “Influencer.” Pageant, more commonly known as beauty contests, serves as a platform for young people to develop their interests and talents in this activity [16].

An influencer is someone active on social media, has a large following, and possesses the power to influence their followers [17]. Pageant influencers serve as social media advocates for pageant institutions, leveraging word-of-mouth promotion to foster positive perceptions among Indonesians [18]. By using their image, Pageant influencers engage the public and encourage action through their content, as advocates for digital campaigns. Additionally, can stimulate tourism and contribute to local economies through the creative sector [19]. In Indonesia, the involvement Pageant Influencers have started to conduct digital campaigns in various fields such as tourism, culture, environment, social, and education. It is especially important to increase public interest in joining as one of the pageant influencers [20].

Therefore, an interpretive study is needed to better understand this phenomenon [21]. Based on the Pageant Influencer phenomenon in Indonesia, this research aims to explain the role of Pageant Influencer involvement in carrying out digital marketing campaigns in Indonesia [22]. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will also be useful in investigating how influential the role of pageant influencers in promoting and forming branding in content.

Literature Review

Social media campaign

Social media has become a key tool for marketing campaigns in the digital age, offering opportunities to reach target audiences with consistent messaging across platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, as outlined in Kotler and Keller’s integrated marketing communication theory [23]. It fosters deeper connections through interactive content, fulfilling needs for information, entertainment, and social identity, as explained by Blumler and Katz’s uses and gratifications theory [23].

Granovetter’s social network theory further emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships in spreading information, highlighting the role of influencers and shareable content. Well-designed campaigns can leverage social media algorithms to boost message visibility, often triggering viral effects without a large promotional budget [24].

Thus, social media serves not only as a distribution platform but also as a space to craft brand narratives, making it an essential tool for engaging audiences and spreading digital campaigns, as seen with pageant influencers [25].

Pageant influencer

An influencer is an individual who wields significant influence within online communities, driven by factors such as popularity, specialized knowledge, or active engagement in specific topics or industries [26]. They can play a pivotal role in shaping the opinions, decisions, and behaviours of their followers through content disseminated on digital platforms like social media [27].

Pageant influencers, with their credibility and aspirational image from beauty pageants, have become key figures in promoting brands and social causes, effectively capturing attention and driving engagement on digital platforms. Their association with pageants connects them to cultural, social, and commercial narratives, allowing them to endorse products and campaigns effectively [28].

For instance, studies indicate that the credibility and relatability of pageant influencers are strongly impacted through strategic social media campaigns that amplify their reach and relevance [29].

Video content creation

Video content creation has emerged as a pivotal tool in digital marketing and education, driven by its ability to engage audiences visually and emotionally [30]. Effective video production involves several strategic steps that align with theories of communication and learning [31]. Pre-production focuses on planning, including defining objectives, target audience, and key messages, which echoes the principles of Shannon and Weaver's communication model emphasizing clarity and audience understanding [32].

The production phase ensures high-quality visuals and audio, leveraging Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which highlights the integration of visuals and text to enhance comprehension [33]. Finally, the post-production stage involves editing and refining, ensuring congruence between the message and presentation to prevent cognitive overload, as suggested by research on multimedia congruence in educational content [34].

Video content succeeds when it offers interactive, personalized experiences that meet audience needs, aligning with the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Well-produced videos with clear objectives and engaging narratives enhance retention and impact [35].

Methodology

This research investigated 15 informants through a video interview technique based on the qualitative-exploratory study. This study employed non-participant observation by monitoring social media campaign posts of pageant influencers and pageant institutions. The questions posed utilized a semi-structured interview format based on

their titles and background of the pageant competitions participated in by the pageant influencers.

Informants were pageant influencers with diverse backgrounds in pageantry and with different titles. These sources ranged from campus to national-scale pageant influencers involved in various pageant competitions. To analyse the data, the research utilized category analysis based on Miles and Huberman's interview method with three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [36].

Interviews were recorded using Zoom Meeting recordings. Interview questions focused on the extent of pageant influencers' roles in social media campaigns and their impact on personal branding. Table 1 shows the title and pageant events of the informants between 2019 to 2024.

Table 1. Informant Profile

No	Pageant Event	Initial
1.	Miss Universe Indonesia	TG(7)
2.	Miss Indonesia	AW(5), EV(1)
3.	Miss Chinese Indonesia	SJ(9), NA(10), KA(13), MT(11)
4.	Putra Putri Pariwisata Nusantara	YP(15)
5.	Miss Teenager Indonesia	TG(7)
6.	Duta Bahasa Nasional	NW(12)
7.	Koko Cici Jakarta	NA(10)
8.	Miss Mega Bintang Banten	AA(2)
9.	ICON Wajah Pesona Indonesia	KA(13)
10.	Abang Nene Jakarta	NHT(14)
11.	Duta Generasi Berencana	GRH(4)
12.	BINUS Career Ambassador	DCT(6), EH(8), EV(1), WWV(3), AW(5), AA(2)

Results and Discussion

The Internet empowers opinion leaders to reach global audiences, with influencers gaining prominence through clear, high-quality content that fosters emotional connections and meets users' informational and entertainment needs, significantly impacting marketing outcomes. According to one source (YP), pageant influencers play a role in social media campaigns in Indonesia, one of which is through events like the Batik Advocacy Show, where finalists present their self-created batik designs, each conveying a unique advocacy message.

This research question involved interviews with pageant influencers in Indonesia who have created various video content related to digital campaigns. Table 2 presents the key findings from the respondent interviews. Five common themes emerged regarding the communication process and the role of Pageant Influencers in Indonesia. Currently, various events and competitions have increasingly expanded their presence on social media.

Informant SJ obtained information about the Miss Chinese Indonesia event through the social media platform, Instagram. From the advertisements that appeared, SJ explored

further details by visiting its official Instagram page. Three types of social media campaigns were identified: Culture, Promotion, and Education.

The informant (WWV) added that before the grand final round, as ambassador finalists, they were tasked with creating several video challenges as part of a digital campaign, one of which involved producing a promotional video for the BINUS 2023 Job Expo to provide information on job vacancies. Informant (TG) mentioned creating an advocacy video about social media's impact on education, particularly its influence on Indonesian teenagers.

Apart from that, the ability of pageant influencers to create digital campaign content can expand the reach of the pageant institution itself [14]. According to the interviewees, the campaign goals include increasing awareness, engagement, and inspiring audiences.

“The campaign I created as a student ambassador focused on raising awareness about the importance of education in Indonesia, to encourage Indonesian children not to drop out of school. Education is not just theory; it provides numerous benefits that will support the future of Indonesia’s next generation.”(AW).

Informant (EH) also had the chance to review videos from a pageant they previously participated in, focusing on the visual presentation, video production process, and campaign content, all designed to educate a broad audience. As influencers, they possess the potential to shape audience attitudes through their social media accounts and collaborate with other accounts [37].

They create digital campaign content for specific pageant organizations as well as for their pageant titles, to raise awareness among followers and enhance personal branding [27].

Table 2. Major Finding

Category Finding	Common Point
Type of Campaign	Culture Promotion Education
Goals of Campaign	Increasing Awareness Engagement Inspiring Audiences
Platform of Campaign	Instagram TikTok
Message Goals	persuasive information
Pageant Influencer Criteria	nano-influencer micro-influencer macro-influencer

The effective social media platform for digital campaign in Indonesia is Instagram & TikTok [38]. With campaign content in the form of videos, the respondents upload them to their personal social media accounts on the Instagram and TikTok platforms [39].

Based on the interview results, the interviewees more chose the Instagram platform to conduct digital campaign activities in Indonesia.

Informant (NA) stated that they prefer using Instagram as their social media platform because it is widely used by fellow pageant influencers and enthusiasts, making it easier to build their personal brand and ensuring their advocacy resonates more effectively. Informant (MTJ) shared that digital campaign content is more effectively conveyed on Instagram, as it allows them to reach a wider audience and gain more views.

Informant (KA) noted that many Gen Z individuals currently use Instagram to watch various types of content. In contrast, Informant (NHT) observed that while TikTok offers a variety of trending topics, Instagram provides a more structured engagement experience. The sources believe that Instagram has successfully attracted the attention of social media users and is more familiar when used for content creation.

With the content mirroring strategy, several sources use two platforms, Instagram and TikTok, to post content [39]. However, informant (NV) uses Instagram and TikTok, choosing platforms based on their popularity, trends, and alignment with their target audience's preferences. This approach facilitates the sources, as pageant influencers, in creating digital campaign videos in Indonesia.

Pageant Influencers are recognized by the audience's enthusiasm for being inspired to realize something that is being campaigned by pageant influencers, or the motivation to participate in beauty pageants in Indonesia to become a pageant influencer [40]. Their message goals are informative and persuasive. Informant (YP) shared that his background in Information Technology inspired him to develop an application that uniquely introduces batik, addressing the concern that younger generations are no longer learning this craft from elderly artisans.

This need for innovation in cultural preservation aligns with Informant (GRH)'s role as a Generasi Berencana Ambassador, where they not only promote the beauty pageant's image but also serve as a role model, especially for the youth of Bandung City. Similarly, Informant (DCT) emphasized the importance of gathering valuable information before launching a digital campaign, noting that they often followed influencer accounts related to pageants to learn essential tips and tricks.

In line with these efforts, Informant (KA)'s campaign focused on using social media to introduce and promote Chinese culture, highlighting the power of digital platforms in spreading cultural awareness. Based on the results of the interview analysis, the level of influence of pageant influencers is determined in three categories: nano-influencers, micro-influencers, and macro-influencers.

Nano-influencers are categorized as having fewer than 10,000 followers, micro-influencers are categorized as having between 10,000 and 100,000 followers, and macro-influencers are categorized as having more than 100,000 followers [41]. Another

significant factor is the interview results show that almost all interviewees emphasized the importance of content quality [42].

Afterward, the analysis shifts to the social media account's posting schedule [38]. Therefore, when creating a digital campaign in Indonesia, several factors must be considered: (a) Campaign goal planning, (b) Determining the right audience, (c) Designing engaging content concepts and ideas, (d) Adapting content to the chosen platform, (e) SEO (Search Engine Optimization) optimization, (f) Content measurement and evaluation, and (g) Creating content for a sustainable campaign.

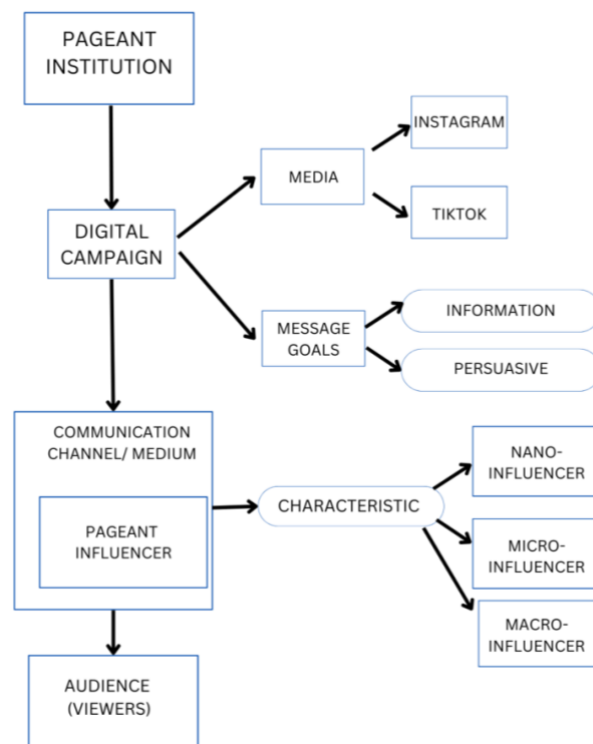


Figure 1. The Process of Communication and Role of Pageant Influencer

Through the communication process or message delivery from Pageant Influencers in the form of digital campaigns (Figure 1), some campaigns involve multiple parties, namely the pageant institution [43]. The interviewees mentioned participating in campaigns requested by the pageant institution before being selected as ambassadors, where they created video challenges at various stages, indirectly promoting the institution [44]. Informant (SJ) stated that, aside from holding the title of Miss Chinese Indonesia Best Social Media Campaign and Digital 2023, she has also frequently created personal digital campaigns related to Chinese culture in Indonesia.

The concept of digital campaigns in Indonesia is widely applied to pageant influencers who act as both ambassadors and content creators, regarded as opinion leaders on social media [45]. However, further research is still needed to theoretically and conceptually confirm that the role of ambassadors in digital campaigns in Indonesia can fully be considered as opinion leaders capable of driving change and development concerning the Diffusion of Innovation Theory [46].

Conclusion

Pageant influencers in Indonesia play a pivotal role in digital campaigns, leveraging social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to advocate for social issues through cultural, promotional, and educational content. Their influence is measured by the quality, depth, and persuasive nature of their messages, which aim to raise awareness and inspire audiences in a society characterized by rapid video consumption.

Categorized as nano, micro, and macro-influencers based on their reach, they collaborate with various stakeholders, including the government, to ensure campaign success, highlighting their importance as advocates in modern Indonesian society.

The research conclusion points out, that the role of influencers as opinion leaders in Indonesia has great power, especially on social media. So, social media campaign activities in Indonesia cannot be separated from pageant influencers as advocates. This has succeeded in proving the impact of the role of pageant influencers in implementing social media campaigns in Indonesia, namely increasing awareness, engagement, and inspiring audiences

However, the phenomenon of Pageant Influencers is still relatively new, with limited literature on their effectiveness. Given their significant influence on social media, especially Instagram, future studies are hoped to explore their effectiveness in the entertainment industry, beyond their role in digital campaigns, with advancements in technology and research facilities.

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