

Cosplay in Indonesia: It's Not Just Cosplay, It's a Business Opportunity

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Abstract:- In this millennial generation, everyone wants to be the center of attention. They want to get attention from others and this is how cosplay gained popularity in Indonesia. Through their cosplay, people are able to gain others attention. One of the main selling points of cosplay is their unique and colorful attributes. Such as their wigs and costume. Up to date characters and highly detailed costumes are some of the determining factors to get a successful cosplay. Costume makers, costume sellers, photographers see that opportunity to make money from it and make it into a sustainable source of income. The purpose of this research is to study how they communicate with the cosplayers to promote then sell their products and services with e-marketing; and also explore in depth what kind of intercultural elements are implemented during the exchange. This will prove that in this generation, online marketing is as effective as offline marketing. The data in this research is based on observation, documentation, and interview from relevant participants.

Keywords:- *Cosplay, Costume, Business, E-Marketing, Social Media.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The word 'Cosplay' is made up of two words that are costume and play, which means the art of people wearing costume from specific character in game, manga, anime, movie, or comic books, and portray the personality of the character they choose too. The term cosplay is reported to have been created in 1984 by Takahashi Nobuyuki, founder and writer of Studio Hard publishing company, to describe the fans of science fiction and fantasy he saw (Lunning, 2006). Cosplay is a process of converting the two-dimensional image/fantasy from manga, anime, or any 2D character to a three-dimensional living character in real time (Rahman et al, 2012). It originates from Japan back when anime was booming worldwide and in North America when superhero comics. It appears to have the most evidence to support it, cosplay actually blends from Japanese and North American contributions (Winge, 2006). People wants to mimic the popular character from anime. On the other side of the world, western do the same. People wants to mimic their fictional superheroes they found from comic books like Batman, or Superman. People named this era of comic books, superheroes, anime, and games as popular culture, or pop

culture to be short. Pop culture is happening around the world. That can be seen from many countries held pop culture events annually. On most of the pop culture events, cosplay can easily be found. Many exhibitors used cosplay as a tool to promote their self-made comic book at the events and conventions, by role-playing the specific characters from its comic book (Rahman et al, 2012). People who doing cosplay is called a cosplayer. Cosplayers are motivated to pursue their interests, learn numerous skills, connect with mentors and networks, and enrich their experience of life (Bender & Pepler, 2018). Cosplay is a skillful hobby. A cosplayer should master these skills to become a good cosplayer. These skills that can describes as: play, performance, appropriation, multitasking, collective intelligence, and networking (Lotecki, 2012). Cosplay itself involve four elements: a narrative, a set of clothing, a play or performance, and a player itself (Lamerichs, 2011). One of cosplayers' common mistake is cosplayers often foreground the costume, not the character they cosplayed (Lamerichs, 2014). Cosplayers dominated by the millennials generation. A millennial is thought to be a person born between the years 1982 and 2005. They are sheltered, confident, team-oriented, pressured, and achieving (Simonson, 2010). Cosplayer needs to wear costume and properties that they want to make it as perfect as the actual character appearance. Knowing people have those needs, some people sees that as an opportunity to make money from those needs. The researcher met two cosplay costume and properties vendors in Indonesia, Angel Rose and Q-love. Both are cosplayers and also make money from cosplay it selves with their own way. Angel Rose is a cosplay costume maker and Q-love is a cosplay costume and properties seller. They saw cosplay is not just a hobby, but also a business opportunity for them. Because there is business principle that any products can be brought to markets through product conceptualization, product creation, and product propagation being carried out by individuals and communities in any geographical region (Gibson et al, 2015). They both selling their stuff through internet, especially in social media. They also do their own specific marketing strategies to gain trust and more prospective customers. Social media have marketing and promotion opportunity that transcends the standard middleman and connects companies directly with prospective customer (Sajid, 2016).

II. METHOD

Data collection techniques used in this study were divided into 2 and grouped into primary data and secondary data. The primary data uses interview data collection techniques. The interview is a conversation between researcher and informant, which is assumed to have important information about an object (Berger, 2018). The type of interview used is a semi structured interview. The semi structured interview is that the researcher has a written list of questions, but it is still possible to ask questions that are freely related to the issues raised (Longhurst, 2003). In this interview the researcher makes it possible to develop questions according to the situation and conditions so that it is possible to get more complete data. The researcher decides to use interviews as a primary data collection technique because both gaming and cosplay and their integration in Indonesia today are still evolving and keep pace with the times, so it needs to be investigated in depth to the very beginning of the whole thing up to now. As for secondary data, researchers used observation and documentation data collection techniques. Observations were made on Angel Rose's and Q-love's social media. Documentation was also carried out to support all the data that had been collected, such as collecting testimonials from their buyers, looking for articles about costume making for cosplay, and anything involved with them.

Data analysis techniques used in this qualitative study were divided into 3 stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Westbrook, 1994). Data reduction is a sensitive thinking process that requires intelligence and breadth and high depth of interview (Namey et al, 2008). In reducing this data, the researcher's insights will develop, because they can find the values of the findings and the development of significant theories. The results of this data are sorted out by reducing, summarizing, grouping the main points, and focusing important things based on certain concepts, themes and categories that will provide a sharper depiction of the observations that will facilitate the researcher. Data display is done after the data reduction is complete. Data display can be done in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, flowcharts, and the like (Lyons, 2000). By displaying this data, it will be easier to understand the data that has been obtained. Conclusion drawing and verification is the third and final step in qualitative research after going through the stages of data reduction and data presentation. Conclusions in qualitative research make new findings that have never before existed. This finding can be in the form of a description or description of an object that was previously still unclear (Miles & Huberman, 1984)

III. FINDINGS

For these two business' interview, they are all cosplayers at the first place. They did the cosplay with much effort than now. Then at some point, they have found that getting their cosplay stuff was hard. Maintain the cosplay as a hobby for them is an expensive stuff and tiring. The choices they had were limited, either they make it all the costumes

and accessories by themselves, or they need to buy it from local sellers or overseas sellers at expensive price. After they found how to do it and hot to get it, they began to cosplay again in comfort. But after that they saw the cosplay itself and their findings as an opportunity for them to make money. They saw it from their friends' need of the cosplay stuff that quite hard to get at that time, just like as they experienced it in the past. They decided to sell their products to their friends first and that was the start of their snowball effect. New customers from their friends' friend order the costume, accessories, and any other cosplay stuff to them with reasonable price until now. The market is easy to reach because they are in the community itself. They can easily promote their stuff to sell to their prospective customers. This proved that online marketing is as effective as offline marketing, and combining both online and offline marketing can bring the best of each methods to gain maximum results.

A. *Cosplayers as Costume Makers*

Angel Rose Design is a tailor company, specialized with custom order for cosplay and any other outfit designs. Started from 2006 when the owner knew cosplay for the first time, she felt that getting her cosplay costume was quite hard at that time. She need to custom order to a tailor and she saw their result was not that good. Has a fashion design degree, she started to doing cosplay herself in 2009 with her self-made costume. She satisfied with her the result and continue it for the next two years. At 2011, while still doing cosplay, Angel Rose saw this cosplay as an opportunity to make money. Not become an idol like Clarissa Punipun, but she made 3 popular cosplay costumes at that time and sell it to her friends. It's all sold out. Since then, Angel Rose committed to make her own workshop and brand it with name Angel Rose Design. Angel said:

"I found out that in this cosplay community, become a cosplayer is not just the only way to get money. I have experienced it myself that to get a proper costume for cosplay is a hard task to do. Either you going to buy from local stores with average quality, or you need to order from tailors but with expensive price. So with my skill as a fashion designer, I started to make first 3 costumes from popular anime characters and sell it online with reasonable price. It went great because all the costumes are sold out. After that I convinced that there's a market for a costume maker, because cosplayers need their costume look great but with reasonable price."

Now Angel Rose's customers are Idol Cosplayers, Influencers, Artists and Illustrators, Celebrities, Production Houses, Event Organizers, and all other hobbyists. Also her market is not just in domestic market anymore, but also from overseas. Angel Rose said that her overseas customers also order their costume of their need to Angel Rose with no significant problems. Angel Rose's workflow is just the same whether the order is from domestic or overseas. First the customers need to send the costume design or references. Then Angel Rose will suggest the materials she going to use, from the entry level to the high end quality. After the customer agree about their costume and the material, Angel Rose will calculate the cost of the costume. After the deal

was made, the customer need to pay some down payment and Angel Rose start to work on it. Angel explained:

“Our order workflow is quite simple, because we don’t like long-winded process. Customers need to feel everything is as easy as ABC. First, customer contact us via WhatsApp, tell us what costume they going to need, then we ask them their costume references. After we saw their references, we suggest them materials that suit their need. If they are OK with all those, then we offer the price, all include from the materials and for the production cost. After that we ask them to fill the work order form, containing personal data and down payment details. After all those done, their order will get into our waiting list.”

Nine years is not a short time. Angel Rose needs to improve her business in order to maintain it. Angel Rose advertise her service with her own way. She watched the newest anime, read the newest comic manga in order to stay up to date to the latest trends among her market, and did the cosplay of the popular character with her self-made costume, did photoshoot and posted it on her personal social media. Also she asked her customers to take photos with their costumes made by Angel Rose for her portfolio, posted it in Angel Rose’s social media and website.

In order to maintain customer’s loyalty, she made Q&A periodically in Angel Rose’s social media, especially with Instagram Story. In that time she will answer all the questions from her customers, from costumes related to anime and manga related. She claimed it made the customers feels cared and valued.

B. Cosplayers as Costume Resellers

Q-love is a costume reseller brand, specialized in getting the ready-to-wear costumes from overseas and sell it to the customers with Facebook Page platform. Managed by two peoples who also do cosplay regularly, Q-love is still a new business. Started from early 2019, but already got many repeat customers because of their good customer handling and speed of their services. Q-love not only sell costumes, but also daily clothes, wigs and accessories for cosplay depends on customer’s request and its availability from the suppliers. Q-love explained:

“Many of our cosplayer friends complaining they find it difficult to have a nice ready-to-wear cosplay costume from overseas. The website is not in English, it need a credit card or PayPal to make a purchase, and also the shipping fee that makes no sense for them. So we come up with the idea, what if we make a store that reselling those stuff online. We have Credit Cards, we able to read Chinese and Japanese that used in those websites, and we can cut down the shipping fee because we going to buy it large quantity. That should not be a problem for us. Also we can easily promote our business because our friends need it. So we did it.”

They began the business because they see their friends’ need of cosplay costumes, wigs, and any other accessories as an opportunity for them. So they made Facebook Page named Q-love, in Indonesian read: kilaf, a popular phrase for hobby

related in Indonesia that means the act of blunder and impulsive buying. Build the trust and gain more customer from this newly business was not an easy task for them. Q-love asked their friends what they need for cosplay, and they gave their friends a special price at first. They also said that they need their friends to share Q-love Facebook Page to their friends also. Q-love focus on cosplay community as their main target market. To maintain the business, they also do the cosplay regularly on events and conventions. They also bring their customers’ goods to events and conventions and deliver it directly to them. Q-love said all of those was to build trust and feel more personal towards their customers. Rei, a cosplayer, who bought cosplay costume from Q-love said:

“I knew them since 3 years ago. We met them in a convention and they are great friends. But now I know they are not just nice as friends, but also they are professionals, especially when I try to order this costume I want but I cannot make the online payment because credit card was needed. I don’t have credit card. So I posted on Facebook, I told that I want to buy this but I cannot pay it. Suddenly one of them message me that they can help me to buy it, but in exchange I need to promote their Facebook Page on my Facebook account. Three weeks after that, the costume arrived at my front door. They are really helpful for me. I found no difficulties to buy this costume from Q-love.”

IV. DISCUSSION

There are different culture development from each country who have cosplay as their subculture. In Japan, the cosplayers tend to make their own costume, gather around and learning each other how to make their cosplay costume on events and social media (Matsuura & Okabe, 2015). Also the Australian cosplayers do the same. The cosplayers making their own costumes or assist others with the design and manufacture of their costumes (Norris & Bainbridge, 2009). That can be analyzed that what Japanese and Australian cosplayers do creating and wearing of costumes in cosplay circles are both a subcultural practice (Mountfort et al, 2019). Different from Japan and Australia, the Hong Kong cosplayers tend to individually make their costume themselves and it involves weeks and months of planning, creating, or sourcing and customizing costumes in the space of personal time (Peirson, 2019).

The costume maker and costume reseller businesses grows among the cosplayer community because they have the need of costume as one of their element of cosplay. This statement is supported by the fact that the market of imported fashion brands is increasing (Moon-Sang, 2019). Costume as a one of the main element of cosplay because through the use of costumes and any other essentials, cosplayers are able to bring to life a figure that was once considered artificial or unreal (Gn, 2011). They saw it and experienced themselves that the costume is an essential item for cosplay and saw their friends struggled to make and get the costume they need, so they began to think what solution they can do to get nice and decent costume with affordable price for cosplay. Before they start it, they have already realized that Indonesian cosplayers

have different culture for costume making. Many of them are unable to create their own costume, and they are unable to purchase the decent cosplay costume they need from overseas.

As Angel Rose and Q-love decided to start the business, they received a good response from the market. As for now Angel Rose hired more tailors to accommodate more orders to come, and also she applied a waiting list system. On Q-love, they have no issue according to many new orders come in, because they implement pre-order system since they started their business. Talking about opportunities, Angel Rose's background is a bachelor of fashion designer, so she knows what she doing from the very first. For the Q-love, both are bachelors of Visual Communication Design, who have studied about entrepreneurship since they were in the college. Plus, both have the same community, they are cosplayers, so they know exactly what's going on and what their friends need.

V. CONCLUSION

Cosplay is not just for fun, and cosplay is not just a hobby. Cosplay is much more than that. Cosplay can be a new business field for any aspects. This research found that to make money in the cosplay field is not just become a guest cosplayers in events and conventions, but also selling the cosplay essentials is any other way for it. This research also found that costume is one of the essential aspect in cosplay, so people start to make it and sell it to the other cosplayers. There are also suppliers overseas that make ready-to-wear costumes for cosplay. And for the promotion, they use the cosplay itself to become their language of marketing. Cosplay has been used as their intercultural element to promote what they are selling effectively. Online marketing is as effective as offline marketing. One of the factors are fashion related information through social media had positive influence on purchase intention (Kim & Kim, 2018). Because on the previous research it also said that the use of social media is becoming increasingly complex communicative practice that cannot be separated in this modern era (Kim et al, 2014). To reach the best result of product marketing, it needed to combine the online and offline marketing as well.

VI. FUTURE RESEARCH

There are still many cosplay businesses that haven't covered yet in this research, such as Properties Maker that specialized in making weapons, armors, and any other accessories for cosplayers, Cosplay Photographer that specialized in capturing moments, actions, and emotions of cosplayers, and Talent Agency that scouting and managing cosplayers to attend the events and conventions as guest stars because of time and place limitation during Social Distancing period in Covid-19 pandemic.

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