

Empathy Approach as Solution for Brand during Pandemic COVID-19

Case Study: Indonesian Based Artisan Brand TULISAN

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Abstrak

The massive spread of Covid-19 not only brought disaster for Indonesian Indonesian from health perspectives, but also in economy amid the implementation of physical and social distancing that forced many people to stay at home. The economy impact was so huge that forced many companies to cut down their workforce and even some of them choose to closed down the business. Tulisan as a brand that produce wearable artworks products also hampered by this economic crisis. This publication studies the effectiveness of empathy study in order to help business like Tulisan in order to survive the pandemic Covid-19. The outcome of this research will serve as the evidence on the significance of Empathy Study of Design Thinking method for business, especially during time of crises like Pandemic Covid-19.

Keywords: Empathy Study, Brand, Covid-19, Pandemic, Tulisan.

Abstract

1. Introduction

Empathy is the preliminary phase of Design Thinking that aim to understand user lives, in order to solve problems from user perspectives [1].

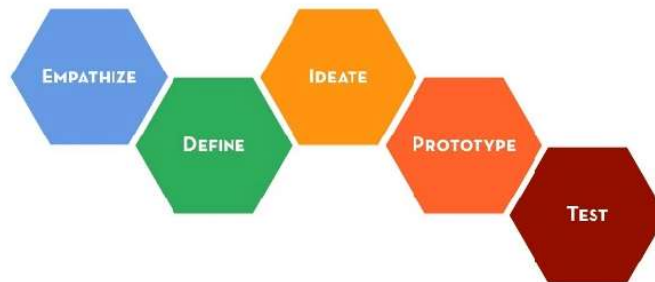


Figure 1. Design Thinking Steps (Source: Stanford D School)

Empathy is crucial because it helps design thinkers to set aside his or her subjectivity [2], thus they can maintain their objectivity in order to design the solution for particular problem. Unlike traditional marketing research, empathic approach is not concerned with facts about people, but more about their motivations and thoughts [2]. Good empathy approach will enable business to understand their customers better, especially during difficulty times like Pandemic Covid-19 that hampered worldwide economy since early 2020.

Indonesia's economy is expected to grow by 2,5% in 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic, down from 5,0% in 2019 according to Asian Development Bank (ADB) [3]. This means a huge impact for business in the country. It is evidence with the announcement of the permanent closure of Airy, one of major Indonesian startups in hospitality industry in May 31 2020. Airy's shutdown follows that of food logistics startup Stoqo, which is seen as the first tech casualty of the pandemic in Indonesia [4].

Tulisan, as small medium artisan brands realized that the economic impact will inevitably hamper their business. Therefore, they decided to design a new strategy to pivot in order to save the company. One of the tools that they use to design the new strategy is the utilization of empathy study.

In order to explore the effectiveness of empathy study, we need to do implement the strategy that developed based on data that being collected and analyzed through empathy study.

As a case study, this paper will present the results of the implementation of empathy approach in Indonesian brand Tulisan during pandemic Covid-19.

2. Method

The methodologies that being used in this research is combination between (i) ethnographic approach through interview and observation, (ii) mapping the data with Empathy Mapping, lastly (iii) experimentation method in to testing the effectiveness of empathy study.

Empathy Mapping that being used in this paper is the mapping from Norman & Nielsen Group [5].

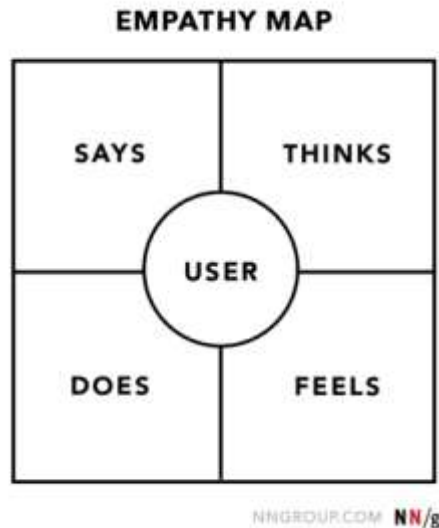


Figure 2. Empathy Map (Source: Norman & Nielsen Group)

The experimentation phase was conducted during the implementation of the Large Scale Social Restriction (LSSR) by the Government of DKI Jakarta, which is from April to June 2020.

3. Result & Discussion

Since 2010, Tulisan has been emerging from a home-based art studio, into a prominent artisan brand selling limited edition serigraphy printed bags and accessories. Most of their customers are middle class female with age range from 25 to 60. Their professions varied from housewives, professionals, to business-woman.



Figure 3. One of Tulisan's outlets (Source: Tulisan's website)



Figure 4. Mungil Bag, one of bestselling Tulisan's product (Source: Tulisan's website)

The announcement of the first case of Covid-19 in Indonesia in early March 2020 has brought concern for Indonesian, especially they who lived in Jakarta. The number of cases increased rapidly 2300% within 10 days [6]. This forced the Government of Jakarta to implement the Large Scale Social Restriction in April 7th 2020. This announcement was a warning for brand like Tulisan whom the revenue generated mostly from sales on their 3 offline stores. The simple solution is to increase the revenue in online. However, it is not an easy job that could be done in a short amount of time. Therefore, the strategy to response the situation should be effective and could be done in shortest amount of time. In order to do that, Tulisan decided to start from their customer perspective, and in order to do this we use Empathy approach.

The primary data collecting was conducted online through Tulisan's media social account Instagram and also through online survey platform Typeform. The questions covered from (1) their thoughts about Tulisan as a brand, (2) the things that Tulisan could improve, (3) their reason to buy Tulisan's product and (4) what is their wish for Tulisan in the future. All the data then processed and mapped into the Empathy Map.

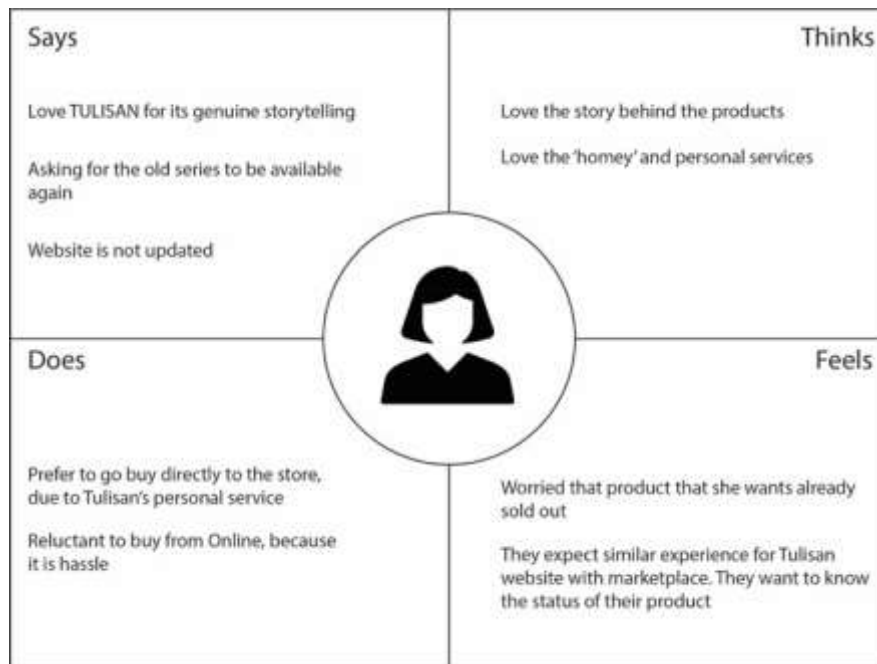


Figure 5. Empathy Map for Tulisan (Source: Author)

In summary, all the data that gathered could be categorized and mapped in Empathy Map (Fig. 5) as follows:

1. What Customers says about Tulisan
 - a) They love Tulisan due to its genuine storytelling.
 - b) They asked for the old collections could be reproduced.
 - c) They said that Tulisan's website is not updated, especially for the collection of products.
2. What Customers do with Tulisan
 - a) They prefer buy directly from the outlet, due to Tulisan's personal customer service.
 - b) They are reluctant to do shopping from website, because they are familiar with E-Commerce platform like Shopee or Lazada, but not purchasing from brand's website. They think it is more hassle.
3. What Customers think about Tulisan
 - a) They love the story behind each product.
 - b) They love the 'homey' and personal services of Tulisan.
4. What Customers feels about buying Tulisan's product through website
 - a) They feel if they buy through website, they afraid that the product that they want already sold, since the website is not updated.
 - b) They would expect the online shopping experience in Tulisan would similar with the online shopping experience through E-Commerce platform where they can get clear information regarding the status of the product.

Based on the mapping results, we can learn about some pain points from customers point of view that made them reluctant to shop online through Tulisan's website. Those pain points are:

1. Tulisan's website is not updated
2. Customers are afraid that product that they want would be sold out if they shop through website.

Other than all those pain points, we can also know about some gain points that could be considered during design process. Those gain points are:

1. Customers love the genuine storytelling.
2. Customers love the 'homey' and personalized service from the Tulisan's stores.

All gain and pain points above then used as a guideline in order to created strategy in response of the Large Scale Social Restriction. The strategy that was created called: Bridging the Experience.



Figure 6. Visualization of Bridging Experience (Source: Author)

The basic idea of this strategy based on the needs of Tulisan’s customer that expecting similar experience between offline and online shopping experience. This strategy will be executed with the following procedures:

1. Product’s storytelling should be exposed in Tulisan’s digital appearance. Primarily through Instagram account @mytulisan and website.
2. Utilization of Instagram @mytulisan to directing potential customer to Tulisan’s website.
3. Updating the product stock in Tulisan’s website.
4. Create ‘Interactive Personal Shopping Assistant’ in WhatsApp.



Figure 7. Tulisan’s Instagram account before the implementation. (Source: Instagram account @mytulisan)

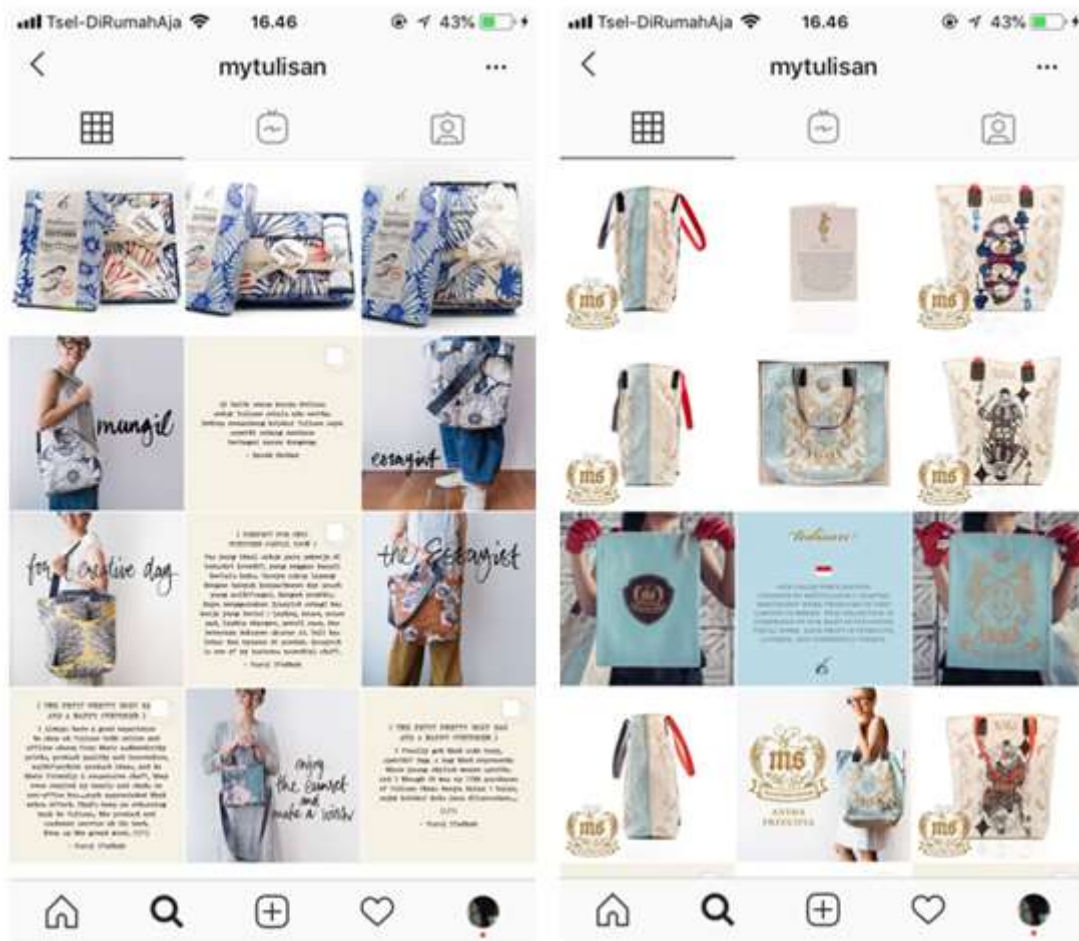


Figure 8. Tulisan’s Instagram account after the implementation. (Source: Instagram account @mytulisan)

The implementation of emphasizing storytelling in Instagram has increasing the engagement in Instagram account @mytulisan. This resulting to the increasing of visitor’s traffic in Tulisan website. This is a good outcome, because Instagram serves as the entry point for the Customer Experience Journey.



Figure 9. Customer Experience Journey (Source: Author)

Customer Journey 1:

The Customer see the product from one of the Instagram post that mentioned that they can purchase the product from the website. After they checked the availability of the product, they can contact the Personal Shopper through WhatsApp’s feature like messaging, audio call, and video call, to consult the size and also to

asked how to do the payment and the shipment procedure. Finally, the customer will return to the website and finished the transaction.

Customer Journey 2:

The Customer see the product from one of the Instagram post that mentioned that they can contact Personal Shopper for further information. Then they can consult the size, the availability, the payment method, and the shipment procedures through WhatsApp's feature like messaging, audio call, and video call. Finally, they can go to the website to finished the transaction.



Figure 10. Tulisan's Sales Report Comparison (Source: Tulisan's Finance Department)

The outcome of this strategy has been positive. This is evidence from the sales report comparison between each month in 2020 and the previous year. Tulisan's sales report (Fig. 10) even shows that for the revenue relatively stable during the implementation of Large Scale Social Restriction although there was slightly decrease from March to April, but despite that, the sales in April 2020 surpassed the sales in the same month in 2019. In addition, the sales in June increased drastically. However, due to the confidentiality of internal financial report, the author cannot reveal the exact number of the sales.

This sales result serves as evidence that the bridging experience strategy proven to be successful to be implemented by brand like Tulisan. Interactive Personal Shopper through WhatsApp platform as part of bridging experience manage to address the Customer's pain points, especially their worries regarding the availability of product that they want.

In addition, this study shows that the implementation of empathy study approach would provide brand better understanding of their customer. Thus, they could create better strategy and helping brand to survive in the time of crises such as Pandemic Covid-19.

4. References

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