

# PERSUASIVE LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES IN INDONESIAN E-COMMERCE CAMPAIGNS FOR THE 2021 PANDEMIC MARKETING FRAMEWORK

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## ABSTRACT

*The research examined the use of persuasive linguistic strategies in the marketing campaigns of Indonesia's top e-commerce platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The research analyzed media coverage data collected manually over the year, focusing on Tokopedia, Shopee, Bukalapak, Lazada, and Blibli. Each platform utilized unique linguistic techniques to address consumer concerns and maintain trust amidst the crisis. Emotive appeals, such as language evoking safety and community, urgency through time-sensitive offers, and social proof showcasing widespread acceptance, were used to influence consumer behavior. The analysis reveals that Blibli emphasizes strategic partnerships and acquisitions, while Shopee employs aggressive promotional campaigns. Tokopedia highlights national pride and community support, Bukalapak focuses on government collaborations, and Lazada has limited promotional impact compared to its competitors. The research demonstrates that Lazada's slower growth is tied to its underutilization of persuasive language, highlighting the importance of linguistic strategies in maintaining consumer trust and market visibility during crises. This research contributes to understanding how persuasive language can serve as a critical marketing strategy in times of uncertainty, with platforms like Shopee and Tokopedia successfully leveraging these techniques to engage consumers. Limitations include potential data incompleteness due to manual tracking methods, and future research is recommended to explore consumer responses to these advertising strategies.*

**Keywords:** consumer trust, COVID-19 pandemic, e-commerce marketing, media coverage, persuasive language

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019 and had a significant global impact throughout 2020 and 2021, brought about profound changes in consumer behavior and business operations. In Indonesia, one of the most noticeable shifts is the rapid acceleration in the adoption of e-commerce. With lockdowns, social distancing measures, and a general reluctance to visit physical stores, consumers turn to online platforms for their shopping needs

(Young, Soza-Parra, & Circella, 2022). E-commerce platforms, recognizing this shift, quickly adapt their marketing strategies to not only attract new users but also to retain existing ones through the effective use of persuasive language (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

The top five e-commerce platforms in Indonesia, Blibli, Shopee, Tokopedia, Bukalapak, and Lazada, leverage the power of language to meet the heightened demands of consumers during the pandemic. These platforms employ various persuasive strategies, such as emotive language, urgency, and

social proof, to influence consumer behavior. Emotive language refers to the use of words or phrases that evoke emotional responses in the audience, aiming to create feelings of safety, security, or happiness. Urgency is created through language that pressures consumers to act quickly, such as limited time offers. Social proof involves showcasing how many others have already purchased or engaged with the product or service, building trust through perceived widespread acceptance. The strategic use of language in these campaigns aims not only to encourage online purchases but also to build trust and a sense of community among consumers (Cheung, Pires, & Rosenberger, 2020).

Research has shown that persuasive language plays a crucial role in influencing consumer behavior, especially in times of crisis. For instance, studies have found that the use of emotive appeals, social proof, and urgency can significantly impact purchasing decisions (Batra & Keller, 2016). During the pandemic, these strategies became even more relevant as consumers sought reassurance and reliability in their purchasing choices. The e-commerce platforms in Indonesia effectively utilize these techniques, incorporating them into their advertisements, promotional messages, and customer communications (Setiawan et al., 2020).

The linguistic strategies employed by these platforms include the use of emotive language to evoke feelings of safety and security, the creation of a sense of urgency to drive immediate action, and the implementation of social proof to demonstrate widespread acceptance and trust in their services. For example, phrases like 'Shop safely from home', 'Limited-time offer', and 'Join millions of satisfied customers' are commonly used to persuade consumers. These approaches not only address the immediate concerns of the consumers but also position the platforms as reliable and community-oriented (Wang et al., 2020).

Moreover, the economic impact of these linguistic strategies is significant. According to a report by McKinsey & Company (2021), the e-commerce sector in Indonesia saw a substantial increase in transactions and revenue during the pandemic, driven by the effective use of digital marketing strategies. The use of persuasive language is a key component of these strategies, as it helps to convert potential customers into actual buyers and encourages repeat purchases. This increase in e-commerce activity not only supports the economy during a challenging period but also lays the groundwork for sustained growth in the sector (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Previous research has highlighted the importance of language in marketing, particularly in digital contexts. For example, research by Kronrod (2022) demonstrates that language that aligns with consumers' values and emotions is more likely to result in positive engagement and conversion. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as consumers are looking for brands that can empathize with their situation and provide solutions that resonate with their needs (Kronrod, 2022). Each

media may have one specific tendency in news reporting. For example, The Jakarta Post employs language to convey attitudes and ideological stances in its reporting on the Omicron variant. Research finds that while the newspaper maintains a politically neutral tone, it strategically adapts its content to appeal to a diverse audience, aiming to boost advertising revenue and readership (Indriyani & Widyastuti, 2023).

Similar to the use of metaphorical representations to critique and influence social norms, e-commerce platforms in Indonesia employ persuasive language to shape consumer perceptions and build trust, ultimately fostering a deeper connection with their audience (Langoday, 2024). The construction of identity and social relationships through language parallels the way e-commerce platforms in Indonesia use language to shape consumer perceptions and behaviors. The socio-cultural influences on discourse underscore the importance of context in effective communication, which is crucial for e-commerce platforms aiming to resonate with diverse audiences (Firmonasari, 2023).

This research aims to explore the unique linguistic strategies used by Indonesia's top five e-commerce platforms during the 2021 pandemic and to analyze their effectiveness in meeting consumer demands and driving economic growth. By examining the specific language techniques employed and their impact on consumer behavior, this research seeks to provide insights into how businesses can leverage persuasive language to enhance their marketing efforts. Additionally, the research will offer strategies that businesses can adopt to effectively communicate with their audiences and achieve their marketing objectives in both crisis and non-crisis situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, the strategic use of persuasive language by e-commerce platforms during the pandemic highlights the critical role of linguistic techniques in digital marketing. This research will contribute to understanding how language can be used as a powerful tool to influence consumer behavior and drive economic impact, offering valuable insights for practitioners and scholars in the field of marketing and linguistics (Kronrod, 2022).

This research is pioneering in its comprehensive analysis of the interplay between emotive language, urgency, and social proof in the context of e-commerce marketing during a global crisis. Unlike previous studies that have typically focused on these components in isolation, this research uniquely integrates them to examine how they collectively influence consumer behavior in Indonesia's rapidly evolving digital marketplace. By focusing on the specific linguistic strategies employed by leading e-commerce platforms during the 2021 pandemic, this research offers novel insights into the nuanced ways these platforms adapt their messaging to resonate with consumers' heightened emotional and psychological states. The research's exploration of the simultaneous deployment of these persuasive techniques highlights the sophisticated and strategic use of language in digital marketing,

contributing to a deeper understanding of how businesses can effectively engage with their audiences during times of crisis.

## METHODS

This research employs qualitative content analysis to investigate the use of persuasive language in the marketing campaigns of Indonesia's top five e-commerce platforms, Bilibli, Shopee, Tokopedia, Bukalapak, and Lazada, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The primary objective is to identify the specific linguistic strategies these platforms use and analyze their effectiveness in driving economic impact.

The data collection process involves systematic tracking and analysis of online campaign materials and related news articles. Through the qualitative content analysis, the research analyzes 2,153 news articles and online campaign materials published between January and December 2021. The data sources primarily consist of top-tier national media based on the number of monthly visits, which can be tracked through the traffic estimator tool Hypestat.com. The media consists of tier 1 (>1,000,000 monthly visits), such as *Suara*, *tempo*, *Pikiran Rakyat*, and tier 2 (500,000 – 1,000,000 monthly visits), such as *Kompas*, *Detik*, and *CNBC Indonesia*. Tier 1 media includes leading national news portals, while Tier 2 encompasses widely recognized regional and industry-specific publications (Butt, 2019).

To systematically identify persuasive techniques, a list of keywords and phrases is developed based on their frequency and relevance in conveying messages related to emotive language, urgency, and social proof that those e-commerce platforms promoted during the pandemic from January to December 2021. These keywords are chosen based on their frequency and relevance in conveying persuasive messages (Wang et al., 2020). Specifically, the keywords that this research employed are inspired by the respective commercial campaigns and monthly events of each e-commerce, for example, '*Shopee Mantul Sale*', '*Tokopedia Bangga Buatan Indonesia*', '*Blibli UMKM Fest*', '*Lazada-Lion Parcel*', and '*Lazada 9.9 Big Brands Sale*'. To achieve more comprehensive media tracking, the researchers also use the names of respective e-commerce platforms in the Google search engine to allow the detection of corporate-related news. The analysis also considers the context in which these strategies are employed and their alignment with the overall campaign objectives (Braca & Dondio, 2022). Therefore, the selected news headlines are then grouped into several highlights of media coverage, key spokespersons and their statements, and campaign themes to decipher the types of persuasive language strategies that those e-commerce platforms used.

Once the news headline identification and theme grouping are complete, the categorizations of persuasive language strategies followed, including (1)

emotive language that contains phrases and expressions that evoke emotional responses, such as initiatives to safely shop from home during the pandemic and campaigns to empower local products as part of economic recovery; (2) urgency that includes phrases that create a sense of immediacy, such as limited-time offer during the double date campaigns; and (3) social proof that includes statements that indicate widespread acceptance or popularity, such as brand collaborations and business development initiatives.

The research compares the effectiveness of linguistic strategies across the five e-commerce platforms. This comparative analysis highlights the unique approaches of each platform and identifies common patterns and best practices that contributed to their success (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, the research employs the following two measures. First, triangulation is achieved by cross-referencing the campaign materials with news articles from multiple credible sources. This helps to validate the consistency and accuracy of the information (Moon, 2019). Second, detailed documentation of the data collection and analysis process is maintained to ensure transparency and replicability. This includes a clear record of the keywords used, the sources of campaign materials, and the criteria for selecting news articles (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method enables a comprehensive examination of the persuasive linguistic strategies employed by Indonesia's top five e-commerce platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. By analyzing the use of language and its economic impact, this research provides valuable insights into how effective communication can drive consumer behavior and support economic growth. The findings will contribute to the broader understanding of digital marketing strategies and offer practical recommendations for businesses aiming to enhance their marketing efforts through persuasive language.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researchers collect a total of 2,153 news articles from top-tier Indonesian online mass media outlets to analyze the coverage of e-commerce growth throughout 2021. These articles are grouped based on the news angles, key spokespersons, and campaign themes to extract data related to the specific use of persuasive language to maintain each e-commerce's sustainability during the momentum of the crisis. The extraction is then simplified into the respective use of emotive appeals, urgency, and social proof strategies.

The number of media coverage from January to December 2021 revealed significant variations in the visibility of Indonesia's top five e-commerce platforms. Tokopedia received 422 mentions, Shopee 550, Bukalapak 335, Lazada 229, and Bilibli 617. As shown in Figure 2, Shopee and Bilibli receive the highest media coverage among Indonesia's top e-commerce platforms from January to December

2021, as shown in Figure 1.

The higher number of mentions for Shopee and Blibli can be attributed to their frequent promotional campaigns and aggressive corporate movement strategies, respectively, during the pandemic. Shopee’s extensive use of ‘double date’ sales, such as 9.9, 11.11, and 12.12, generates significant media attention and consumer interest. These campaigns are not only successful in driving sales but also in creating substantial buzz in the media. Blibli’s higher coverage is partly due to its strategic collaborations and acquisitions, which are extensively covered by the media. For instance, Blibli’s collaboration with BCA Digital and the acquisition of PT Supra Boga Lestari Tbk are major news stories that significantly boosted its media presence.

Tokopedia’s substantial coverage reflects its robust initiatives to support local sellers and

the successful campaigns it launches. Campaigns like *#JagaEkonomiIndonesia* and *Waktu Indonesia Belanja* (WIB) resonate well with consumers and media alike, showcasing Tokopedia’s commitment to supporting local economies and communities during the pandemic. Bukalapak and Lazada, while receiving fewer mentions, still maintain significant media presence through their strategic initiatives and responses to the changing market dynamics.

Due to the high amount of news coverage, a total of five national media outlets are found to be the top news contributors to those e-commerce sites, as depicted in Figure 2.

Kompas (25.1%) is one of Indonesia’s oldest and most respected news organizations, known for its comprehensive reporting and in-depth analysis. Its extensive reach ensures a broad and diverse readership. Detik (18.9%) is renowned for its real-

### Top Tier Media Coverage January-December 2021

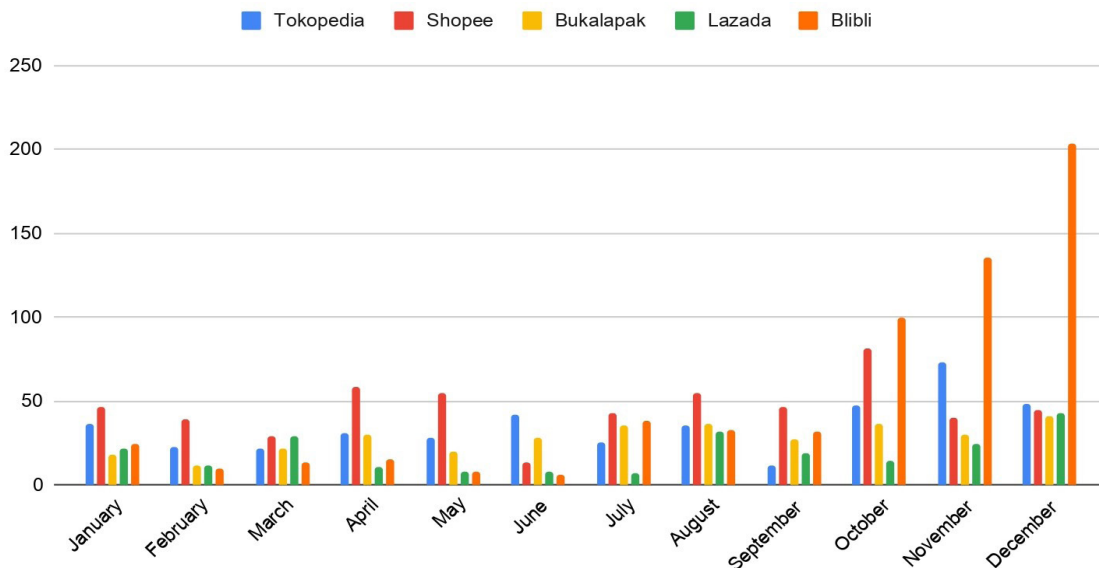


Figure 1 Top Tier Media Coverage January-December 2021

### Top 5 Media

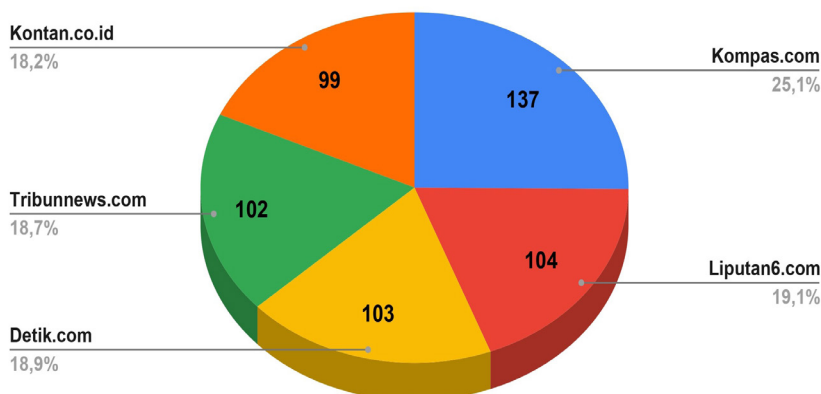


Figure 2 Top Five Media

time news updates, making it a go-to source for many Indonesians seeking timely information. Tribunnews (18.7%) is famous for its regional news coverage and strong local presence. Kontan (18.2%) is recognized for its financial and economic reporting, attracting readers interested in business and market news. Finally, Liputan6 (19.1%) is well-regarded for its multimedia approach and comprehensive news coverage. The prominence of these media outlets ensures that the data collected reflects a broad spectrum of public discourse and consumer engagement with e-commerce platforms during the pandemic.

The key spokespersons quoted most frequently in the media coverage are presented in Figure 3. Shopee Executive Director Handhika Jahja gets the most exposure (148 times) in the media as the key spokesperson for Shopee’s campaigns. He also frequently represents the company in countering external issues against the presence of Shopee. Meanwhile, Blibli’s CEO (87 times) places second place as the most mentioned key figure in the e-commerce business, which is often portrayed due to his leadership success.

Bukalapak CEO Rachmat Kaimuddin (78 times) is highlighted in the media, especially in response to the platform’s strategic business decisions and partnerships with entities like EMTEK and Grab for the *Kota Masa Depan* project. Tokopedia External Communication Lead Ekhel Chandra Wijaya (62 times) appears with his responses regarding Tokopedia’s significant growth and initiatives during the pandemic. For instance, he emphasizes the increase in Tokopedia’s selling partners by 2.5 million, reaching a total of 7.2 million as of December 2020. This achievement marks Tokopedia’s commitment to supporting local sellers through campaigns like *#JagaEkonomiIndonesia* and *Tokopedia Nyam*, facilitating food and beverage sales.

The *#SelaluAdaSelaluBisa* campaign is particularly noted for helping users fulfill daily needs and offering business opportunities through digitalization. Meanwhile, Lazada Chief Marketing Officer Monika Rudijono has been highlighted 22 times. She often speaks about Lazada’s high-profile campaigns, such as the Lazada Birthday Sale featuring international celebrities like Katy Perry and NCT Dream, and their pioneering double date sales like 7.7 Mid-Year Sale and 9.9 Big Sale.

For the next angle, several recurring themes emerge from the media coverage of each e-commerce platform. The popular themes that emerged in the media coverage for each e-commerce platform are summarized in Figure 4. This visual breakdown highlights the distinct focus areas that characterize the public narrative surrounding these companies.

Shopee is prominently featured in the media for its ‘double date’ campaigns, accounting for over 30% of the coverage. These campaigns, including the 12.12 Birthday Sale, 9.9 Super Shopping Day, 4.4 Mega Shopping Day, and 11.11 Big Sale, are highly effective in attracting consumer attention and driving sales, significantly contributing to Shopee’s media presence.

Bukalapak’s IPO coverage constitutes 14.3% of the media attention, highlighting the platform’s financial strategies and market performance. Bukalapak’s funding milestones, including raising US\$234 million from investors like Standard Chartered, Microsoft, EMTEK, and GIC Sovereign Wealth Fund, are prominently covered, reflecting the platform’s efforts to secure its financial position and support its growth ambitions.

Tokopedia’s merger with Gojek, which garnered 14% of the coverage, and subsequent discussions about the GoTo brand and potential IPO plans are major news stories. The legal challenges following the

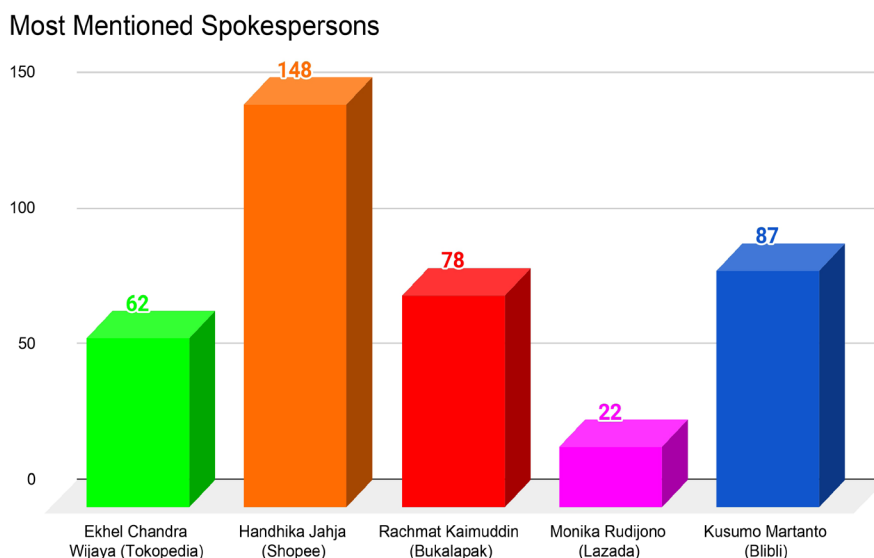


Figure 3 Top Key Spokespersons

merger, specifically the GoTo brand dispute, represent 11.8% of the coverage, highlighting the complexities of integrating two major brands.

For Blibli, collaborations with BCA Digital contributed to 7.5% of the themes, and the *Dikagetin Histeria* 12.12 shopping campaign, reaching 6%, are major themes in the media. Blibli's acquisition of PT Supra Boga Lestari Tbk, which is 5.8% of the highlights, further explains the platform's strategic expansion efforts and its aim to strengthen its position as a leading online grocery provider.

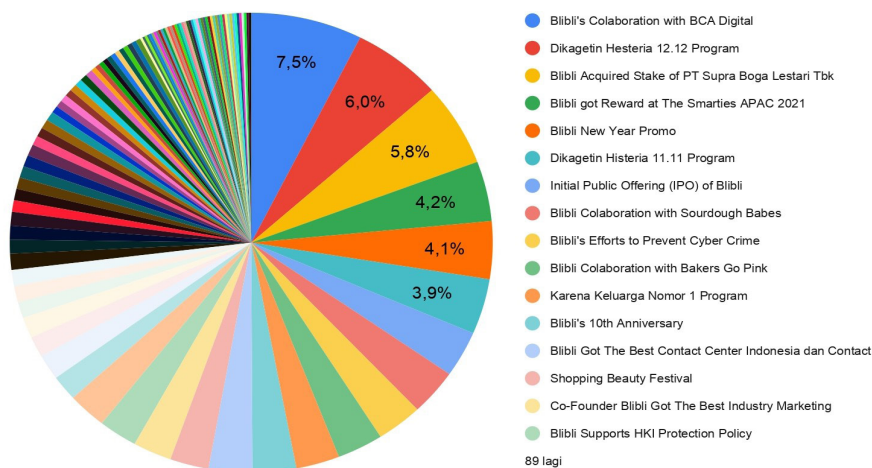
Lazada faces significant media scrutiny over its decision to close cross-border access for imported products, which garners 7.4% of the coverage. Additionally, the cancellation of a flash sale for the Xiaomi Poco M3 due to abnormal transaction activities and the subsequent flash sale campaign on January 29, 2021, following a due diligence check by Xiaomi and Lazada, are notable stories. Lazada's 11.11 Super Show & One Day Biggest Discount campaign also receive considerable media attention, accounting for 6.6% of the coverage.

The year 2021 marks a significant peak in

the growth of Indonesia's top five e-commerce platforms, driven by the pandemic and quarantine measures. Compared to 2020 and 2022, 2021 sees an unprecedented surge in online shopping activities. According to the latest report from research firm Momentum Works, Indonesian e-commerce achieved an all-time high in 2020. The sector accounted for 20% of total retail sales in 2020, a significant increase from just 2% in 2016. This figure surpasses that of countries such as the US, France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Spain. Furthermore, data from other recent reports, including the e-economy South East Asia 2020 by Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company, corroborates these findings. It states that Indonesia's total e-commerce Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) reached US\$32 billion last year (Phing et al., 2022).

Table 1 presents the details of the persuasive language tactics, comprising emotive appeals, urgency, and social proof employed by the top five e-commerce platforms in Indonesia during the 2021 marketing amidst the pandemic, in which the major coverage is summarized and deducted as the signature persuasive strategies by each platform.

Blibli Theme



Bukalapak Theme

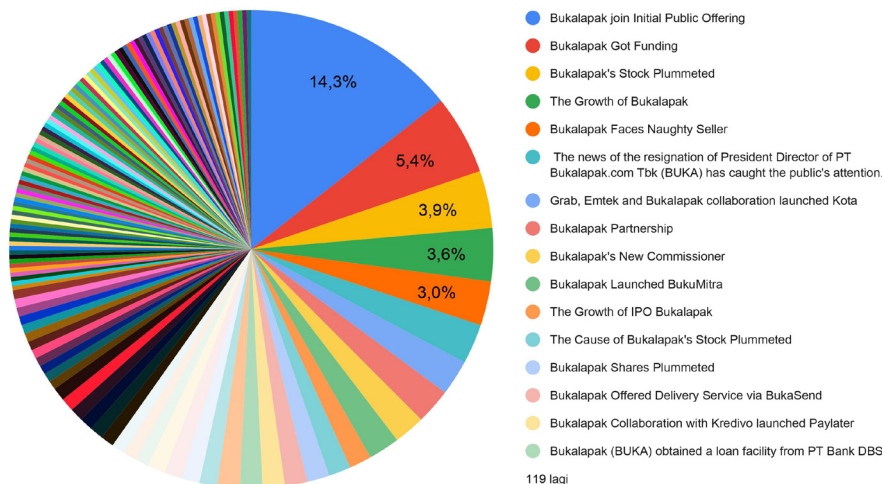
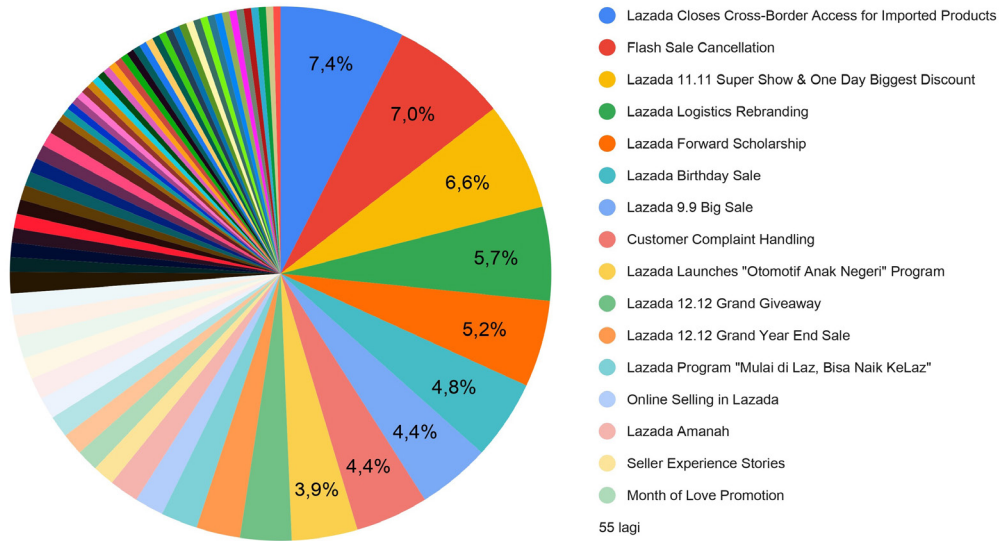
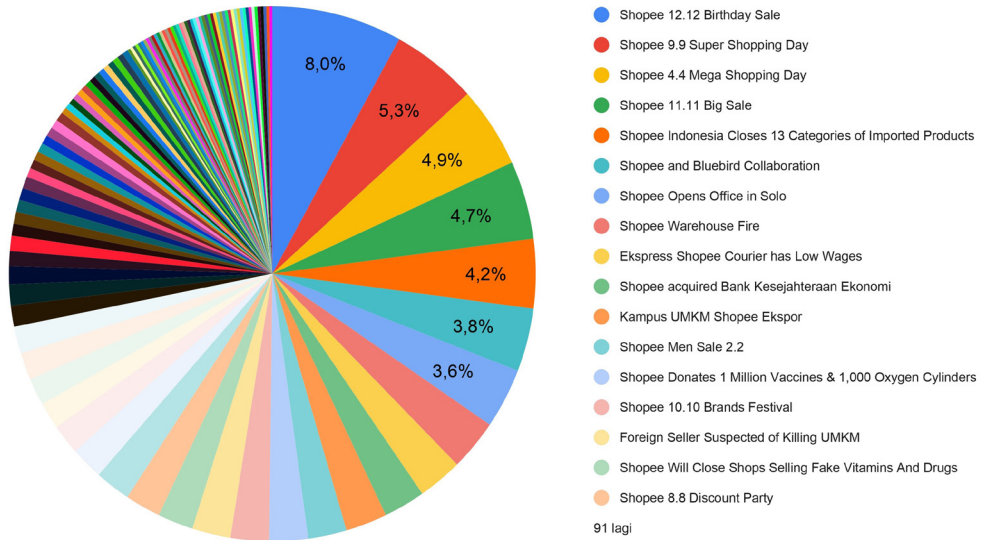


Figure 4 Popular Themes by E-Commerce Platforms throughout 2021

### Lazada Theme



### Shopee Theme



### Tokopedia Theme

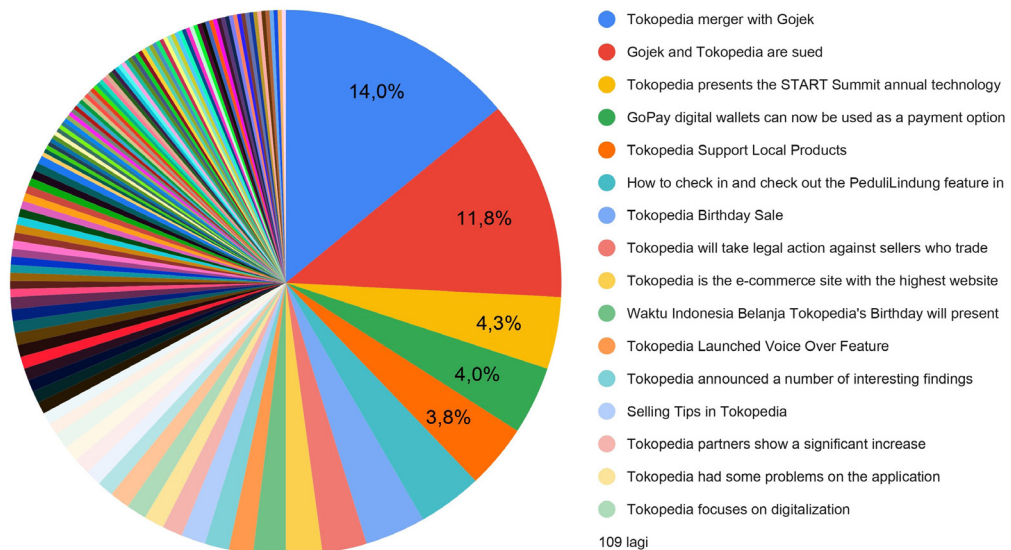


Figure 4 Popular Themes by E-Commerce Platforms throughout 2021 (Continued)

Table 1 Types of Persuasive Languages Employed by Top E-Commerce Platforms in Indonesia during Pandemic 2021

No.	Media Picks	Total Picks	Persuasive Language
<b>Shopee</b>			
1.	Shopee double date campaigns	176	Urgency
2.	Shopee's strategic collaborations and acquisitions	71	Social proof
3.	Shopee's impact on MSMEs support amidst the weakening economy	67	Emotive appeals
4.	Shopee's strategies in handling operational issues and controversies	64	Emotive appeals
5.	Shopee's strategic growth and development	28	Social proof
6.	Shopee's role in Indonesian e-commerce and market leadership	15	Social proof
7.	Shopee's job vacancies and internal operations	13	Social proof
<b>Tokopedia</b>			
1.	Gojek and Tokopedia merger	114	Social proof
2.	Tokopedia's digital payment and features	42	Social proof
3.	Tokopedia's support for local products	39	Emotive appeals
4.	Tokopedia's special campaigns and events	28	Urgency
5.	Tokopedia's security and regulatory compliance	14	Emotive appeals
6.	Tokopedia's brand ambassadors	17	Social proof
7.	Tokopedia's partnerships and collaborations	16	Social proof
8.	Tokopedia's technological innovation and features	15	Social proof
9.	Tokopedia's social and community initiatives	15	Emotive appeals
10.	Tokopedia's market position and growth	14	Social proof
11.	Tokopedia's user experience and satisfaction	14	Social proof
<b>Blibli</b>			
1.	Blibli's major promotional events and sales programs	168	Urgency
2.	Blibli's major collaborations and acquisitions	138	Social proof
3.	Blibli's awards and achievements	89	Social proof
4.	Blibli's participation in national and international events	43	Social proof
5.	Blibli's business growth and IPO	29	Social proof
6.	Blibli's support for consumer safety, security, and cyber crime prevention	28	Social proof
7.	Blibli's web series and social engagement	18	Social proof
8.	Celebrity endorsements and brand ambassadors	8	Social proof
<b>Bukalapak</b>			
1.	Bukalapak's IPO and stock movements	100	Social proof
2.	Bukalapak's strategic collaborations and partnerships	39	Social proof
3.	Funding and financial performance	29	Social proof
4.	Bukalapak's key appointments and resignations	19	Social proof
5.	Bukalapak's services and feature launches	18	Social proof
6.	Customer service and consumer complaints	18	Social proof
7.	Bukalapak's corporate growth and market expansion	17	Social proof
<b>Lazada</b>			
1.	Lazada's major sales campaigns	49	Urgency
2.	Lazada's operations and logistics	49	Social proof
3.	Lazada's educational and support programs	26	Social proof
4.	Lazada's customer experience and satisfaction	15	Social proof
5.	Lazada's collaborations and partnerships	10	Social proof



Shopee's emotive appeal is promoting shopping from home, supporting exports, and responding well to regulations, while Tokopedia empowers local initiatives. Shopee and Tokopedia pick up the most relevant issues during the pandemic through the soft-selling strategies of online shopping. These two platforms uniquely correlate the issues into their campaign agendas.

The emotive appeals mainly connect to support the economic recovery while complying with the safety protocols in line with the government agenda, for example, the launch of Kampus UMKM Shopee Ekspor in Surakarta and the persuasion to shop safely from home through 'Shopee dari Rumah'. The intervention of e-commerce companies in the empowerment of MSMEs could signify social proof of collaboration. However, looking at the context of the pandemic, this strategy affirms e-commerce's stance as a solution to the weakening economy that directly contributes positive impacts to the local economy. The empowerment campaigns promote more empathy and solidarity. Shopee's quick act to respond to the issue of the concerning number of foreign sellers who participate on its platforms also helps the portrayal of the platform as a business player that does not merely seek its own profits but rather cares about the sustainability of Indonesia's local economy. Therefore, to counter the issue, Shopee takes direct action to remove counterfeit import products and restrict foreign sellers' activities.

Therefore, Shopee's linguistic strategies are not limited to slogans. It reflects its commitment to be in the same wavelength with the Indonesian government and consumers too. The platform also utilizes influencer endorsements and user-generated content to amplify its messages of urgency and social proof. Influencers, who often have dedicated followings, can serve as powerful validators of a brand's credibility and attractiveness (Alvarez-Monzoncillo, 2023). This tactic aligns with findings that endorsements by popular figures can significantly enhance consumer perceptions of a brand and increase engagement (Hughes, Swaminathan, & Brooks, 2019).

On the other hand, Tokopedia's media strategy heavily emphasizes its various campaigns designed to support local businesses and boost the Indonesian economy. The *#JagaEkonomiIndonesia* campaign, which aims to support and protect domestic sellers, is a significant part of this strategy. By focusing on economic recovery and local empowerment, Tokopedia effectively uses community-focused language to foster a positive public image and build consumer trust (Futri, Afisah, & Saputro, 2021). This approach not only resonated with nationalistic sentiments but also underscored Tokopedia's commitment to societal well-being.

The *Tokopedia Nyam* initiative facilitates local food and beverage sales and is another focal point. Media coverage highlights how this campaign caters to daily needs, emphasizing convenience and reliability, key aspects of persuasive marketing that enhance

consumer engagement (Wulandari, Tayibnapis, & Nasrullah, 2023). The campaign further reinforces these themes by promoting Tokopedia's ability to meet users' everyday needs and offer business opportunities through digitalization.

Tokopedia's initiatives to support local products, such as the *#BeliGameLokal* campaign to promote Indonesian mobile products and the Hyperlocal initiative to boost transactions in eastern Indonesia, are also key media angles. These initiatives highlight Tokopedia's role in promoting local businesses and fostering regional economic development. This narrative of local support not only appealed to nationalistic sentiments but also positioned Tokopedia as a champion of local entrepreneurship (Sudirjo, Novianti, & Santosa, 2024). This not only fostered a sense of community but also helped solidify Tokopedia's position as a trusted platform amidst the pandemic-induced uncertainties (Plekhanov, Franke, & Netland, 2023). This approach aligns with findings that language resonating with consumers' values and emotions tends to result in more positive engagement (Rane, Achari, & Choudhary, 2023).

There is an urgency for Shopee and Blibli to aggressively promote double dates. Shopee and Blibli, despite not being the originator of Indonesia's 'double date' campaigns, leverage these events effectively to maintain their dominance. Throughout 2021, Shopee collaborated with both local and international brand ambassadors for various Harbolnas (National Online Shopping Day) celebrations. The platforms' most aggressive promotional strategies, often referred to as 'money-burning', involve offering substantial discounts and incentives to attract consumers. According to iPrice Group, Shopee is Indonesia's most visited e-commerce platform, with over 127 million monthly visits on average (Putri & Devita, 2021). However, Shopee also faces trust issues due to the presence of China-based sellers on its platform, which leads to regulatory scrutiny and a decision to limit imports to support local sellers (Rhamadanti, 2023).

Shopee's use of persuasive language is evident in its frequent use of urgency as a powerful psychological trigger in consumer behavior. Campaign slogans, such as Shopee Men Sale 2.2, Shopee 8.8 Discount Party, Shopee 9.9 Super Shopping Day, and Shopee Big Ramadan Sale, exemplify Shopee's strategic use of urgency to enhance consumer engagement and foster trust (Putra & Dermawan, 2023). A similar campaign is frequently also launched by Blibli under the theme *Dikagetin Histeria*, for example, Blibli *Dikagetin Histeria* 11.11 and Blibli *Dikagetin Histeria* 12.12. The sense of urgency that is represented by appealing double-date promotional campaigns has proven to significantly increase consumer motivation to act quickly (Mari, Mandelli, & Algesheimer, 2024).

The frequent use of limited time offers and flash sales effectively create a recurring sense of urgency. Research has shown that time-limited promotions can significantly boost consumer participation and sales by instilling a sense of scarcity, thereby encouraging

quicker decision-making (Marjerison, Hu, & Wang, 2022). This strategy is particularly effective during peak shopping periods, which are critical to Shopee's annual sales performance. The utilization of aggressive promotional tactics through double-date campaigns continuously engages with consumers and maintains high visibility despite facing issues with trust and regulatory scrutiny related to foreign sellers (Asian Development Bank, 2023). This phenomenon taps into the psychological principle that individuals are more likely to follow the actions of others, especially when those others are perceived as similar to themselves (Cialdini, 2007). By highlighting the large number of satisfied customers, Shopee effectively reassures potential consumers of the platform's reliability and popularity, which are crucial factors in building and maintaining consumer trust (Kee et al., 2023).

The impact of these persuasive language techniques on Shopee's market position is profound. In 2021, Shopee consistently ranked as Indonesia's most visited e-commerce platform, surpassing its competitors in terms of traffic and consumer engagement. This dominance can be attributed to its adept use of urgency in its marketing communications, which resonate well with consumers and drive high levels of engagement and trust. Understanding and meeting consumer needs is fundamental to successful marketing (Solomon, 2020).

The social proof based on Table 1 is Tokopedia merges with Gojek and collaborates with K-Pop Idols, Shopee donates vaccines and hires celebrity ambassadors, Blibli develops its ecosystem and promotes its leadership profile, and Bukalapak navigates corporate relationships.

The important media pickups related to corporate news approaching the end of the year mark persuasion to improve brand awareness, which is not framed through direct campaigns but corporate decisions that resonate with the public (Zhao et al., 2022). The news related to corporate actions is different from those related to campaigns. Campaigns mainly employ taglines and slogans to create a sense of uniqueness for promotional deals during special events that encourage consumers' purchases. Meanwhile, corporate actions mostly focus on business-to-business relations that improve consumers' awareness of business sustainability. This means that the use of persuasive language also manifests in another form, which is more interpretative rather than directive. E-commerce platforms that rely on this indirect persuasion strategy include Tokopedia, Shopee, Blibli, and Bukalapak.

In 2021, Tokopedia made a strategic movement by merging with Indonesian ride-hailing service Gojek that eventually rebrand their profile as GoTo. The synergy between the two local platforms actually marks a threat of unstable financial sustainability due to the prolonged social restrictions. However, it eventually reflects a new hope of stronger capitalization in the local market, not only from the company's end but also from Indonesian consumers. The merger leads GoTo to land the IPO for fresher funds, which eventually

help it survive and continue its marketing strategies to attract consumers. This is evident that Tokopedia uses corporate engagement tactics to maintain its consumers' trust.

In contrast, Shopee opts for displaying its social engagement by channeling COVID-19 vaccines and some medical needs to assist with COVID-19 handling. This movement reflects the company as a friendly and approachable giant platform that cares about building consumer relationships.

In the use of a social proof persuasive strategy, Tokopedia and Shopee incessantly collaborate with international music groups, especially the growing K-pop idols like BTS, NCT 127, and Blackpink, which also receive substantial media attention. These collaborations are strategic in enhancing brand appeal and reaching a wider audience, particularly among younger consumers who are fans of these artists. The use of celebrity endorsements in advertising is a well-documented strategy for increasing brand credibility and attractiveness (Osei-Frimpong, Donkor, & Owusu-Frimpong, 2019). By associating with globally recognized figures, Tokopedia successfully leverages its influence to enhance its brand image and consumer trust.

Compared to the two e-commerce platforms, Blibli has elevated its social engagement through several strategic partnerships, including with BCA Digital and through the acquisition of PT Supra Boga Lestari Tbk, which manages to strengthen its retail chain. By showcasing these collaborations and the recognition of CEO Kusumo Martanto as a leading industry figure, Blibli also leverages social proof to reinforce its credibility and reliability. This aligns with the concept that consumers are influenced by the actions and endorsements of others, particularly those perceived as authoritative or successful (Cialdini, 2001). This initiative is helpful and considered a move out of the box, considering that the platform might have struggled a lot if it had adopted similar approaches in terms of urgency language like Shopee or copied Tokopedia's hyperlocal agenda.

Meanwhile, Bukalapak's media strategy heavily relies on the use of social proof specifically related to community-focused language, emphasizing support for local businesses and economic recovery. This approach not only fostered a positive public image but also strengthened consumer loyalty by appealing to nationalistic sentiments, although it is facing considerable challenges in business sustainability, including financial losses. However, media coverage often highlights positive aspects, such as its collaboration with the government through the *Kartu Prakerja* program and local initiatives like *Kota Masa Depan*, which aim at digital business penetration in tier 2 and 3 cities. These angles portray Bukalapak as a platform committed to supporting the local economy and small businesses, as Bukalapak also consistently empowers local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through collaborative training. Despite financial difficulties, Bukalapak's focus on impactful social

initiatives helps maintain a positive public image, contributing positively to its public perception and media coverage, even as it struggles with financial sustainability (Nasution, Safirra, & Farid, 2023). This emphasis on community and national pride helps Bukalapak differentiate itself in a competitive market (Cheung, Pires, & Rosenberger, 2020). By framing its platform as a supporter of the local economy and a champion for small businesses, Bukalapak is able to mitigate some of the negative impacts of its financial struggles.

The strategy of using nationalistic and community-centric language proves effective in creating a socio-emotional connection with consumers, as it resonates with their sense of identity and solidarity during the challenging times of the pandemic. Research has shown that language that taps into cultural values and collective identity can significantly enhance brand loyalty and consumer trust (Shin et al., 2019).

Additionally, persuasive language strategies that emphasize social responsibility and community support are known to build a positive brand image and enhance consumer perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Araújo, Pereira, & Santos, 2023). Bukalapak's narrative of economic empowerment and local support not only helped maintain its relevance but also bolstered its reputation as a socially responsible company, thereby sustaining consumer trust and loyalty despite the company's financial difficulties.

Lazada lags behind its competitors in terms of media coverage and consumer engagement. The limited number of promotions and the lower frequency of major sales events compared to its peers contribute to its reduced visibility. Unlike Shopee and Tokopedia, which hold multiple high-profile sales events throughout the year, Lazada's less aggressive marketing approach results in significantly fewer monthly visits. This discrepancy in marketing intensity means that Lazada struggles to capture media and consumer attention (Susilo & Chairiyah, 2021). This limited visibility highlights the critical role of continuous, strategic communication in maintaining consumer engagement and media presence (Jeswani, 2023).

The limited use of persuasive language in Lazada's campaigns may have contributed to its lower media presence. While competitors frequently employ emotive appeals and a sense of urgency to capture consumer interest and drive engagement, Lazada's campaigns are less dynamic. For instance, Shopee's and Tokopedia's campaigns often use phrases like 'limited-time offer' and 'exclusive deal', which are known to create a sense of urgency and stimulate immediate consumer action (Cialdini, 2001). Lazada, on the other hand, does not capitalize on these techniques as effectively, which likely results in its comparatively lower performance. Lazada's failure to integrate such strategies robustly into its marketing efforts likely contribute to its diminished market presence and lower consumer engagement rates. The platform's more subdued approach, without frequent

high-profile campaigns, does not generate the same level of excitement or loyalty among consumers as its more aggressive counterparts (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Research indicates that emotive language and urgency are critical components of effective marketing strategies, particularly in e-commerce (Chen et al., 2022a). These techniques can significantly enhance consumer engagement by tapping into psychological triggers that prompt action that can be helpful in coping with the uncertainty of the pandemic.

The strategic use of persuasive language by these e-commerce platforms plays a crucial role in their media presence and consumer trust during 2021. Persuasive language, characterized by emotive appeals, urgency, and social proof, is effectively utilized to influence consumer behavior and enhance public perception.

During the pandemic, consumer trust is pivotal in ensuring sustainability. Indonesia's top e-commerce company employs relevant narratives related to local economy empowerment, convenient shopping with best deals, strategic partnerships, celebrity endorsements, and leadership highlights. These strategies cover the three domains of emotive appeals, urgency, and social proof in the use of persuasive language for marketing. According to Kim, Jeon, and Lee (2020), emotionally charged language in marketing can significantly influence consumer behavior, enhancing the perceived value of the brand and fostering a sense of loyalty. This approach helps in building connections with consumers, which is crucial during times of uncertainty (Cardoso et al., 2022). The effectiveness of such strategies is further supported by research that reveals a significant use of language in advertising that can lead to higher levels of engagement and recall among consumers (Cheung et al., 2021).

In addition, Ahmed et al. (2022) highlights that branding, which involves creating a deep, emotional connection with consumers, can differentiate a brand in a crowded marketplace. Indonesian e-commerce exemplifies their initiatives by not just promoting products but also by fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose among their users. This strategic use of emotive language helps these platforms not only maintain but also strengthen their customer base during a period of economic uncertainty, demonstrating the power of emotionally resonant marketing.

Next, urgency is a common tactic used across all platforms to drive immediate action. Phrases related to double-date campaigns are frequently employed to create a sense of urgency and prompt quick decision-making (Akin, 2024). This approach is particularly effective during sales events, where consumers are motivated by the fear of missing out on deals.

According to findings by Alutaybi et al. (2020), creating a sense of urgency can significantly enhance consumer responsiveness by tapping into their fear of missing out (FOMO). This movement triggers this psychological state using time-sensitive language to

encourage immediate purchases. During sales events, this tactic becomes even more powerful as consumers are more inclined to act quickly to secure deals before they expire. Research by Nafarin and Oktavio (2021) supports this strategy, highlighting that urgency in marketing messages can heighten perceived scarcity, thereby increasing the product's perceived value, making consumers feel that they must act immediately or risk losing out on valuable deals.

Moreover, Sun, Zhang, and Zheng (2023) have found that urgency cues can lead to higher consumer engagement and faster decision-making. This is particularly evident in the context of flash sales and double-date campaigns, where the limited availability of discounts and products drives a sense of competition among consumers. This technique is also effective in creating a perception of widespread acceptance and reliability (Cialdini, 2001).

According to Hanaysha (2022), social proof, such as customer testimonials and endorsements, significantly affects consumer trust and purchase intentions. By showcasing the vast number of satisfied customers and persistent sound business collaborations, e-commerce platforms reinforce the idea that if many others trust and use their platform, it must be reliable. This method effectively leverages the concept of herd behavior, where individuals tend to follow the actions of a larger group, especially in uncertain situations. In addition to business relationships, social proof is also evident in terms of how e-commerce companies are aware of their young consumers' preferences, encouraging them to engage more with public figures. Research by Jin and Muqaddam (2019) indicates that celebrities can influence consumer attitudes and behaviors due to their perceived authority and trustworthiness. By featuring high-profile personalities in marketing campaigns, it not only boosts credibility but also associates its brand with the positive attributes of these celebrities, thereby attracting their fans and followers even though the media engagement is much lower compared to its other competitors.

Furthermore, Chen et al. (2022b) have found that social proof in online reviews and ratings significantly affects consumers' perceptions of product quality and reliability. According to Soti (2022), persuasive language in marketing communications can significantly influence consumer perceptions and behavior. E-commerce platforms effectively utilize this strategy by crafting messages that directly address consumer concerns about safety, delivery reliability, and product availability during the pandemic. This approach not only reassured existing customers but also attracted new users who are seeking dependable online shopping options amidst widespread uncertainty.

The strategic communication efforts of these platforms also ensure that, despite facing numerous challenges, they are perceived positively by the public. As noted by Cardoso et al. (2022), positive media coverage and public perception are critical for maintaining consumer trust and loyalty. The consistent use of persuasive language helps e-commerce

platforms highlight their commitment to customer satisfaction and community support, reinforcing their reputation.

Moreover, research by Ahmadi and Ataei (2024) indicates that persuasive communication can enhance brand resilience by fostering a strong emotional connection with consumers. This is evident as e-commerce platforms leverage messages to convey solidarity and support during the pandemic, further strengthening their bond with consumers. This positive perception, bolstered by extensive media coverage, is instrumental in their ability to attract and retain customers, thereby supporting their growth and resilience during the crisis. The discourse aligns with the socio-cultural context and aims to raise awareness and position the media as a positive force (Kholifah, 2024).

The effective use of persuasive language not only enhanced media coverage but also played a vital role in sustaining these e-commerce platforms amidst the economic crisis brought about by the pandemic. By addressing consumer concerns and providing reassurance through carefully crafted messages, these platforms are able to maintain and even grow their user base. Persuasive language helps to build and reinforce consumer trust, which is crucial for business sustainability, especially during uncertain times. This aligns with existing research that emphasizes the role of persuasive language in influencing consumer behavior and maintaining trust, especially during times of uncertainty (Asempah, 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS

The research highlights the significant impact of persuasive language that consists of emotive appeals, urgency, and social proof by Indonesian top five e-commerce platforms, Tokopedia, Shopee, Blibli, Bukalapak, and Lazada, in shaping consumer perceptions and maintaining trust during a challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Shopee effectively uses emotive appeals by promoting shopping from home, supporting exports, and adhering to regulations, while Tokopedia empowers local initiatives, fostering a sense of national pride and community support. In terms of urgency, Shopee aggressively promotes double-date campaigns, keeping consumer engagement high. Regarding social proof, Tokopedia leverages its merger with Gojek and collaboration with K-Pop idols, Shopee enhances its image by donating vaccines and hiring celebrity ambassadors, Blibli expands its ecosystem and highlights leadership profiles, and Bukalapak focuses on corporate relationships to strengthen its market position. Interestingly, Lazada adopts a more reserved approach with limited use of persuasive language, leading to a slower pace in consumer engagement and media attention compared to its competitors. This highlights the critical importance of continuous and strategic communication to maintain

consumer interest. The platforms also utilize indirect persuasive language, disseminating corporate news and strategic decisions rather than direct campaigns to subtly influence consumer perceptions, for instance, Tokopedia's corporate engagement tactics, Blibli's business development through constant market acquisition, and Bukalapak's commitment to work with the government in empowering local small businesses.

In conclusion, the strategic use of persuasive language, whether direct or indirect, plays a pivotal role in sustaining e-commerce platforms' operations and consumer trust during the pandemic. By addressing consumer needs through emotive appeals, creating urgency, and leveraging social proof, these platforms not only mitigated potential negative perceptions but also reinforced their competitive positions in a rapidly changing market. This research underscores the power of language in marketing, offering critical insights into how businesses can navigate crises and maintain consumer loyalty through carefully crafted communication strategies.

The effective use of persuasive language by these e-commerce platforms during 2021 underscores its importance as a tool for navigating crises. Through strategic communication, these platforms are able to address consumer concerns, reinforce their market positions, and manage their public image. Therefore, language persuasively offers significant features in influencing consumer behavior and maintaining trust, especially during times of uncertainty.

In summary, the research reveals that despite the pandemic's challenges, the strategic application of persuasive linguistic strategies plays a crucial role in sustaining e-commerce platforms' operations and consumer trust. By effectively addressing the needs of their audience and navigating media coverage, these platforms not only mitigated negative perceptions but also reinforced their positions in a competitive and rapidly changing market. This research provides valuable insights into the power of language in marketing and its impact on business sustainability during crises.

This research employs a manual backtrack media method to analyze news coverage of Indonesia's top e-commerce platforms in 2021. While this approach provides valuable insights into the use of persuasive linguistic strategies, it is not without limitations. The primary limitation is the potential instability and variability of search engine results, causing a possibility that not all relevant media coverage is captured. Therefore, automated media tracking tools, such as Meltwater and Cision, are recommended. These tools offer comprehensive and real-time media monitoring capabilities that could enhance data accuracy and coverage. However, these tools require significant financial investment, with costs often ranging from US\$7,200 to US\$8,000 annually depending on the scope of services and features required.

Furthermore, the manual nature of data collection in this research may introduce biases and

inconsistencies in the tracking process. Automated tools could mitigate these issues by providing more systematic and exhaustive coverage, thus ensuring a more accurate representation of media mentions and sentiments.

For future research, it is recommended to explore consumer responses to e-commerce advertising methods in greater depth. Understanding how different e-commerce platforms' linguistic strategies align with consumer needs and preferences could provide insights into market segmentation and its impact on customer trust. Research could investigate whether specific language techniques resonate differently across various consumer demographics and how these differences influence trust and engagement with e-commerce platforms. Such studies could also examine the effectiveness of personalized advertising approaches and their role in enhancing consumer loyalty and satisfaction.

While this research offers valuable insights into the persuasive linguistic strategies used by e-commerce platforms during the pandemic, future research should address these limitations and expand the focus to include consumer responses and the effectiveness of targeted advertising strategies. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language use in marketing and consumer behavior, ultimately contributing to more effective e-commerce communication strategies.

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