Article 1

**(NEWS STRAIT TIME)**

**FUTURE PROOF: Teach yourself social media marketing**

By Oon Yeoh - August 9, 2020 @ 8:45am

WE'RE still technically under the Recovery Movement Control Order but most businesses are already operating in full swing. However, with consumer sentiment being low, it's not easy getting customers to buy things or to pay for services. In this tough business environment, it's important to do social media marketing. It's one of the most effective ways to get your message across to your target audience. Almost everyone is on social media, whether it's Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or a combination of these and others.

So familiarity with social media is high. But knowing how to use social media to share pictures and videos with friends is very different from using social media platforms for marketing purposes. Fortunately, there are a lot of online learning programmes to educate yourself about social media marketing. You don't have to go to some school or institute to learn such things. Just go online

There are plenty of blogs and YouTube videos that teach you about social media marketing. However, the problem with free content is that the quality can sometimes be suspect. You may have to go through a lot of low-quality content to get to the good ones. It makes much more sense to just pay for quality content. Online courses can vary in pricing, from very cheap to rather expensive. One of the most affordable platforms to have emerged recently is something called Domestika (www.domestika.org), a platform for creative professionals from around the world to share their knowledge. They have a lot of courses on photography and graphic design but also quite a few on social media.

SAVVY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Some examples of social media courses that you may be interested in

are:

\* Google Ads and Facebook Ads from Scratch (a course by Arantxa &

Guille, a pair of digital marketing consultants from Spain);

\* Development of a Digital Media Plan (a course by Foncho RamírezCorzo, a consultant from Peru); and

\* Brand Strategy on Instagram (a course by Julieta Tello, a business

coach from the UK).

Each of the courses on Domestika is usually priced between US$10 and

US$12, which is very affordable even when converted into ringgit. They

also have course bundles which cost less per course.

Another really good platform for learning social media marketing is

LinkedIn, which has a "Learning" channel with lots of courses to choose

from.

Examples of social media-related courses are Introduction to Social

Media Strategy, Social Media Marketing for Small Business and

Introduction to Facebook Ads. The pricing model for LinkedIn Learning is different from Domestika's.

Course are charged on a monthly basis. It costs US$30 per month if you

pay monthly and US$20 per month if you pay annually.

This might seem like a lot if you convert the fees into ringgit but if you

think about the broad expanse of knowledge and expertise that will be

made available to you if you're a subscriber, it's actually a bargain. And if

you're already a LinkedIn member, you can try it free for a month.

There are also premium courses out there that cost a lot more but these

are highly specialised and offer interactivity that the cheaper courses

don't.

Take, for example, Facebook Marketing School (https://fbmarketingschool.com), a course by Khalid Hamadeh, an exemployee of Facebook.

Khalid is uniquely qualied to teach about Facebook marketing as he has been involved with Facebook Ads since he got out of university in 2014, where he worked on Coca-Cola's agency team for the Middle East and North Africa region.

In 2015, he began work as the primary Facebook ads buyer for Procter & Gamble Canada, which was the single largest Facebook ads buyer in Canada

This job required him to work closely with Facebook, and eventually the company offered him a job in 2016. At Facebook HQ, he worked with some of the biggest brands like Netix, eBay, Amazon, Uber andMicrosoft.

Khalid left in 2019 to start his own businesses, including a consultancy to help other start-ups scale their Facebook marketing efforts.

Eventually this led him to creating his own course which he sells for US$497 for lifetime access. (He offers a 30-day money back guarantee in case you're not satised with the course).

That may sound like a lot of money to spend on an online course but you don't just get a static course. He releases new lessons based on product updates, new insights and developments, as well as student feedback.

Every two weeks, he runs a Live Q&A Sessions with enrolled students of the course, who can ask him anything, whether it's related to the course content, a specic marketing scenario they're in, or new product updates and trends.

He also maintains a private Facebook Group where he and his students engage with each other. "My strategies are based on an understanding of the underlying algorithms, which I teach students at the beginning of the course," he said in an e-mail reply to one of my questions. "My strategies have been tested in randomised controlled experiments — so there's statistical condence backing up any claim or recommendation I make in the course.

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**Article 2**

**FUTURE PROOF: Create your own content**

By Oon Yeoh - June 7, 2020 @ 9:00am

THERE was a time, not too long ago, when if someone loses their job, they'd turn to driving a taxi. Later, being an Uber driver was the thing to do. When Grab took over, that became the thing unemployed people took to doing.

These days though, you can't really do that anymore as the Covid-19 pandemic has really killed demand for ride-hailing services.

Grab Food and Foodpanda riders as well as grocery delivery service riders are in high demand now but if you don't fancy riding around on a motorcycle, that's not really an option for you.

But if you're someone who has just lost a job, what can you do?

One possibility is to create your own content. If you can learn to become a content creator, it opens up lots of possibilities for you.

If your content is good enough, you can actually make money directly from the content itself. But even if the content doesn't generate much money for you directly, it's useful for your personal branding. Lastly, anyone who's able to create content will be appreciated by companies as content marketing starts to become more popular. In short, learning how to create content is a way to future-proof yourself. There was a time when you had to go to university to study media or publishing or lm in order to learn how to make content. And after you graduated, you'd have to join a publisher, a media house or a production company of some kind to get the necessary practical training to create professional quality content. Then social media came along and changed everything. Suddenly, everybody's a publisher. The Internet has all the tools you'd need to publish an e-magazine or ebook. You could have your own podcast and even your own video channel. There's nothing stopping you from doing any of these things, which don't require a license or permit (unlike in traditional media). Blogs gave everyone a soapbox to share their views on things. The advent of the smartphone made it possible for everyone to be a photographer or a videographer. The cameras on today's smartphone can produce HD quality videos (in some cases, 4K quality). But perhaps most importantly, the expectation of the viewer has changed. In the past, anything that you read in papers, magazines or books, or heard on the radio or watched on TV had to be of professional quality. Not so with social media. Consumers of social media content just don't have the expectation for content to be perfectly shot, perfectly edited and perfectly presented. If the underlying content is good, they're happy with it.

THE SUGU PHENOMENON

It's because of the times we live in that someone like Sugu Pavithra (621,000 subscribers and counting) can become the cooking sensation that she is today. No doubt timing was denitely on her side. During the Movement Control Order (MCO), people couldn't go out to eat, so many people were cooking at home. But timing alone doesn't explain her great success. After all, there are many Malaysians doing cooking videos on YouTube. Why did her videos take off like a rocket? There were multiple reasons and all of them were present in a perfect storm that launched her into the consciousness of all Malaysians who love local food. Here are some of her key success factors:

a) She exudes sincerity and authenticity;

b) Her recipes are for dishes that Malaysians love, especially curries and

other spicy fare;

c) The recipes are in a home-cooked style which have a genuine quality

about them;

d) The videos have a very simple format and are easy to follow;

e) The ingredients used are very easy to nd;

f) She speaks in Malay, which every Malaysian can understand;

g) There's a human touch to the videos. She often features her kids in the

videos

Sugu's been featured a lot in the press and has amassed a huge following. Apparently, she's been getting lots of calls from sponsors etc who want to send her things. In fact, her video postings are slowing down because she and her husband have only one phone to shoot the videos with — the same phone they get calls on.

If I were a phone brand, I'd be sending over a bunch of phones to her family, together with all kinds of accessories for shooting videos!

What we can learn from the Sugu phenomenon are the following:

a) For social media videos, production quality doesn't have to be TV station broadcast quality. If you shoot using a mobile phone, it's good enough for web videos;

b) The quality of the content counts more than production values. The underlying content must resonate with the target audience;

c) Keep it simple;

d) Sincerity and authenticity rule

This would apply to any content you make, whether it's cooking or otherwise. Most people have something they are good at. We live in an age where it's possible to become content creators. You don't need a big production team to do this. Sugu has done it with the help of her husband, who shoots the videos while she cooks. As for the platform to deliver your content, there are plenty of social media platforms to use. In Sugu's case, she uses YouTube. You could start a blog, use Facebook, Instagram... whatever works for you. What's important is that the content you're sharing is useful and relevant to the target audience. Keep it simple and keep it real. As mentioned earlier, the content itself could potentially make money. In Sugu's case it has. She has so many followers and her videos are seen so many times that she was able to earn some income from YouTube advertising. But beyond the income she gets from YouTube are the opportunities that her fame has opened up to her. Everyone loves an underdog story and her unexpected success has been a delight to many. I think everyone hopes this will lead to greater things for her. A cookbook perhaps? A TV series? Endorsement deals? Who knows but this is her opportunity. And all because she decided to create her own content with the limited means she had at her disposal. It's something you could do too!

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