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Analysis of The Influence of Digital Promotion, Use of Social Media and Competitive Advantages on Marketing Performance of Travel Agencies

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui tingkat penerapan media sosial sebagai alat promosi yang dilakukan agen perjalanan wisata. Penelitian ini bersifat non-eksperimental, kualitatif, transaksional, deskriptif, dan menggunakan sampel non-probabilitas. Peneliti mengumpulkan data melalui observasi dan wawancara. Hasil analisis mengungkapkan pentingnya peran jejaring sosial dalam strategi pemasaran saat ini. Meskipun banyak departemen pemasaran yang memiliki akun media sosial, tingkat keterlibatan atau interaksi pengguna dengan konten yang dipublikasikan masih rendah, yang menunjukkan perlunya meningkatkan kualitas konten dan strategi yang dapat melibatkan lebih aktif lagi antara pelanggan dan produk yang dipasarkan. Selain itu, pemantauan dan analisis aktivitas media sosial yang baik diperlukan untuk meningkatkan kinerja dan efektivitas strategi pemasaran.

Kata Kunci: *Media Sosial, Promosi, Agen Perjalanan, Wisata*

Abstract

The aim of this research is to determine the level of application of social media as a promotional tool by travel agents. This research is non-experimental, qualitative, transactional, descriptive, and uses non-probability samples. Researchers collected data through observation and interviews. The analysis results reveal the important role of social networks in current marketing strategies. Even though many marketing departments have social media accounts, the level of user engagement or interaction with published content is still low, which shows the need to improve the quality of content and strategies that can more actively involve customers and the products being marketed. In addition, good monitoring and analysis of social media activities is necessary to improve the performance and effectiveness of marketing strategies.

Keyword: Social Media, Promotion, Travel Agent, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

In the current era, communication media have lost their monopoly as intermediaries between brands and the public. Today, they have to compete in advertising with new agencies such as Google and social media (Sari et al., 2024). This phenomenon has radically changed the way we advertise and communicate. Social media has emerged as the dominant platform in public conversation, changing the balance of power in the communication system. They can now interact directly with their audience without needing to go through traditional media (Elizabeth et al., 2023). This results in more personalized and segmented advertising, where advertisers can target specific consumer groups more precisely. Additionally, the interactive nature of social media allows for immediate feedback and ongoing dialogue between brands and their consumers (Jodi et al., 2022). This two-way interaction not only increases consumer engagement but also provides brands with valuable data on audience preferences and behavior (Abdullah et al., 2024).

On the other hand, traditional media is trying to adapt to this new reality. Some of them have integrated digital platforms and social media into their communication strategies to maintain market relevance and reach (Dewi et al., 2023). However, this adaptation process is not easy and often requires a deep restructuring of their business models. This new communications ecosystem is characterized by dynamism, interactivity, and personalization capabilities, in stark contrast to the mass communications models of the past (Solehati et al., 2022). In conclusion, the current communications environment is characterized by a transition from traditional media to a more fragmented and personalized system, dominated by digital platforms and social media (Taufik et al., 2022). This evolution poses both challenges and opportunities for brands and communications media, which must adapt to the changing landscape to maintain their relevance and effectiveness in the digital

era (Sadikin et al., 2023).

Activity on social media is a very effective way to market a brand, and there are many opportunities to attract customers. About 78% of entrepreneurs, most of whom are marketing professionals, believe that social media has become a significant source of sales opportunities for their businesses. Social media provides a broad platform for companies to reach a larger and more diverse audience (Iswahyudi et al., 2023). With the right strategy, companies can build brand awareness, increase customer engagement, and ultimately drive sales. The main advantage of social media is its ability to provide direct interaction with consumers, allowing companies to respond in real-time to customer feedback, questions, or complaints (Rachmat et al., 2023). In addition, social media also allows companies to utilize data and analytics to understand consumer behavior and preferences. This allows companies to develop more effective and targeted marketing campaigns, increasing opportunities for conversions and sales. Companies can track the performance of their campaigns using analytical tools and make the necessary adjustments to achieve better results (Santoso et al., 2022).

Marketing via social media is also more cost-effective compared to traditional marketing methods. With a smaller budget, companies can reach a wider audience through engaging content strategies and advertising on social media platforms. This provides an opportunity for small and medium businesses to compete with large companies in terms of reaching and attracting customers (Murdana et al., 2023). In this context, it is important for companies to keep abreast of the latest trends and developments on social media. This includes understanding emerging new platforms, changing algorithms, and evolving consumer preferences (Kamarudin et al., 2023). By adapting to these changes, companies can ensure that they remain relevant and effective in their marketing efforts. Overall, social media has proven itself to be a powerful tool in the modern marketing world. With a strategic, consumer-focused approach, companies can leverage social media to build strong relationships with customers, increase brand awareness, and drive business growth (Iswahyudi et al., 2023). On the other hand, because of humans' social nature, they always create forms of social interaction in real life, such as with family, friends, and coworkers. However, with the advent of the internet, people started using online or virtual versions of some things, which expanded the reach and removed the geographical and time limitations that existed in traditional interactions. Social media is something that has the aim of allowing users to connect, communicate, and share content to create a community (Nurdiani et al., 2024).

Given their role in communication, social networks have become a very important

trading tool in the advertising industry. Social networks are technological platforms that enhance online social interactions with the primary goal of exchanging information. This has sparked an authentic revolution in the way people communicate, and the advertising industry is not behind in capitalizing on this phenomenon (Harsono et al., 2024). The main advantage of using social media to include information is the ability to reach consumer groups who are truly interested in the product or service being promoted. Furthermore, tourism promotion must adapt to constant technological changes to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the internet (Rachmat et al., 2023). However, despite much research highlighting the importance and benefits of social media, tourism operators often do not fully understand this new world of technology and still have many concerns. Social media and tourism have capitalized on the tourist phenomenon, where tourists can share and recommend information, photos, and opinions about the services and destinations they consume in real-time (Santoso et al., 2022). This creates a new relationship between tourists and clients, which forces the tourism sector to create new strategies to adapt to consumer needs. Therefore, we consider it important to study the implementation of promotional actions in social media as a tool that has developed rapidly in recent years and which is currently not yet fully adapted by the tourism market.

RESEARCH METHOD

Data was collected through observations and interviews conducted during direct visits with travel agents. Travel agents were divided into three groups based on their performance and role in the sector. We created a location map using Google Drive and Google Maps, marking agent locations based on categories of social media use and the number of publications made, to simplify our work. After completing the map, we selected city zones with a high concentration of agents for interviews. We collected data by observing social media, using Google to search for agents on web pages, and tracing social media links on those pages. We also examined relevant travel agencies and tourism companies in this sector to compare their efficiency and utilization of social media. Data was collected using prepared worksheets. This research methodology is non-experimental, qualitative, transactional, descriptive, and uses non-probability samples.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After observation, social networks are important for the tourism sector. However, even though the presence and activity on these social networks look quite high in terms of the

number of publications, likes, or followers that travel agencies have, it turns out that interaction with users is relatively low. For example, if we have an average of 100 people following the page and an average of 20 likes per post, that means only 20% of people interacted with the page. This number demonstrates the low level of user engagement or interaction with travel agencies' published content. Despite having a large number of followers, the audience may find the shared content less interesting or relevant. Therefore, it is important to not only focus on the quantity of publications but also on increasing the quality. Content quality is the key to attracting user interest and encouraging more active interaction. High-quality content that is relevant and interesting to the audience can increase engagement, strengthen relationships with customers, and ultimately support more effective marketing and promotional goals.

The interview results show that all travel agency representatives agree that social media is an important tool in the current era, helping them reach more clients and group them in a more targeted manner. Social media enhances their credibility, gives them a more genuine and dependable appearance, and enables them to reach an audience without geographical restrictions. They also note that social media is an effective advertising tool, allowing them to promote their services, acquire new customers, and increase sales. The primary benefit that stands out is the free nature of social media, which also aids in the viral dissemination of information. The interviews also revealed that a wide range of ages use social media, highlighting its great potential to attract customers. People often use social media in their free time, which can spark interest in travel. However, they also admit that social media management requires a lot of work and consistent time to ensure success.

The differences in social media monitoring between well- and poorly-performing institutions are significant. Well-performing institutions have good systematization in recording and analyzing data, using both statistical tools from social media platforms and internal data collected by responsible staff. They are able to measure the effectiveness of promotions, understand tourist destination preferences based on age range, and track conversions from social media inquiries into real sales. On the other hand, poorly performing institutions show inconsistencies in social media management. They tend not to plan well, are inconsistent in their publications, and don't understand the analytics they get from the platform. They also tend to use personal profiles rather than business pages on social media, which can make the process of interacting with potential customers more difficult. Due to a lack of monitoring and analysis, they miss opportunities to improve their performance through social media. Thus, good social media monitoring can provide major benefits to tourism institutions. This not only helps them understand consumer behavior

and the effectiveness of their marketing strategies, but also allows them to interact with customers more effectively and build strong relationships with them.

The research results indicate that travel agencies continue to manage social networks in a very poor manner. Although most agencies have at least one social media account, many of them do not consistently publish content or even use it incorrectly. Result of this study shows that there is still a lot of room for improvement in social media management by travel agencies. To reach more potential clients, travel agencies need to increase their knowledge and understanding of effective ways to use social media as a promotional tool, and maintain consistency in publishing relevant and interesting content. We can conclude from the interview results that social networks play a crucial role in current marketing strategies. All respondents agreed that social networks are a resource that advertisers are increasingly using to achieve promotional goals. The agency representatives underscored that social networks serve as a cost-effective promotional medium, offering a wide reach and superior results when compared to traditional advertising media. In an economic situation that reduces costs and prioritizes profitability, efficient and low-cost advertising mediums such as social networks are a desirable choice for companies. Thus, understanding the importance of social networks and their ability to achieve promotional goals can help companies develop more efficient and cost-effective marketing strategies.

According to observations and interviews, travel agents use social networks for a variety of purposes in their marketing strategies. They use this platform to acquire new clients, promote tourist destinations, distribute information, create brand awareness, and, of course, increase sales. Social networks have transformed the traditional sales paradigm by becoming a dominant tool in marketing strategy, changing the interactions and relationships between customers and companies. To achieve desired sales goals, it is important for companies to focus on listening, understanding, and responding to customer needs and desires. Today's customers expect easy access to offers, the ability to contact a company quickly, and a prompt response. By understanding and responding effectively to customers, companies can improve their relationships with customers and increase the success of their marketing strategies through social networks.

The interviews also revealed the importance of time and dedication in carrying out promotional actions through social networks. Respondents highlighted that there is a significant amount of time required from work hours to update social networking accounts, and a lack of profile updates can harm a company's image. This can lead to feelings of abandonment by followers, a lack of trust from clients, and negative perceptions of the company. The biggest mistake in using social media is a lack of attention. We recommend

focusing on one of the most relevant social networks if you lack the time or budget to hire a community manager. This highlights the importance of planning when using social media, which includes organizing, planning, and adapting various social media to build online communication channels with users. People often underestimate the complexity of creating a social media marketing plan. However, this is important to do because it can help companies achieve their goals effectively. A social media marketing plan requires painstaking and meticulous effort, but by prioritizing users at the center of the strategy, companies can achieve success in using social networks for marketing purposes.

Based on the observations, it seems that city travel agents primarily use their publications to promote their tour packages and destinations. The posts also contain information about the tourist destination, motivational phrases or good wishes for their clients, as well as information about the agency. However, to ensure the effectiveness of these promotional actions and the achievement of the goals, it is crucial to prioritize user interaction. Although 55% of active accounts were visible during the observation week. Meanwhile, other publications averaged 3.2 likes per post, a very low number. The level of interaction with the user determines the true value of this activity, even with a large number of followers. Having active users can cause content to spread more widely, especially as agencies reach high positions organically. As a result, it is critical to maintain good user interaction in order to increase the effectiveness of promotions through social networks. Social media helps travel agents increase their visibility and reach more clients with a strong appeal.

CONCLUSION

The analysis results from observations and interviews with travel agents suggest that social networks play a significant role in current marketing strategies. Although many agents have social media accounts, the level of user engagement or interaction with published content is still low, indicating the need to improve content quality and engagement strategies. To increase interaction and promotional results, it is important to plan well for the use of social media, with a focus on organization, planning, and consistency in content publication. Reaching the right audience also requires proper segmentation and targeting. In addition, good monitoring and analysis of social media activity is necessary to improve the performance and effectiveness of marketing strategies. By paying attention to these aspects, companies can develop more effective marketing strategies through social networks, increase interaction with users, and achieve better marketing goals.

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