

UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A HOTEL MARKETING TOOL IN BANDUNG CITY

Dewi Indriani Jusuf
International Women University

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Email :
dewijusuf@iwu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The city of Bandung is known as one of the popular tourist destinations in Indonesia, with a number of varied hotels competing in the hospitality industry. Social media has become an important platform in marketing strategies in various sectors, including the hospitality industry. This research aims to explore and analyze the use of social media as an effective marketing tool for hotels located in the city of Bandung. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The research results show that the use of social media as an effective marketing strategy has become an important key for the hotel industry in developing and maintaining their brand presence amidst increasingly fierce competition. By leveraging social media, hospitality brands can leverage a variety of tools, including targeted advertising, reputation management, and high-quality content, to capture customer attention, increase engagement, and drive increased bookings and sales. In optimizing the use of social media, it is important for hospitality brands to ensure that interactions with customers remain responsive, positive and informative, as well as ensure that the user journey from social media to the booking platform runs smoothly. Thus, social media is not only a powerful marketing tool, but also an important tool in building strong relationships between hospitality brands and their customers, generating extraordinary experiences and creating unforgettable impressions for users.

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of widespread use of social media has triggered various business industries to proactively adopt optimal and effective social media marketing strategies. With the use of social media increasingly seeping into people's daily lives, the right marketing strategy on these platforms has become key in building and maintaining a strong digital presence (Masriansyah, 2020). Business industries have recognized the importance of utilizing social media as an effective tool to reach and interact with a wide audience directly (Nurwulandary, 2022). Thus, developing strategies that combine engaging content, intelligent use of analytical data, and precise targeting has become a key focus in their efforts to capture the attention of potential consumers, build brand loyalty, and increase overall sales and engagement (Untari & Fajariana, 2018).

According to the Data Reportal report, Indonesia has recorded more than 160 million social media users in January 2020, a figure that shows enormous potential for businesses in developing and implementing marketing strategies through digital platforms (Nurmalasari & Masitoh, 2020). These statistics confirm that digital presence has become

an important element in reaching consumers in Indonesia, a market that is increasingly connected and dynamic. Thus, both large companies and small and medium enterprises must actively take advantage of this opportunity by building strong visibility and existence on various social media networks that are popular in the country (Handika & Dama, 2018) . Facing the rapid growth in social media use, marketing strategies specifically designed to respond to the preferences and behavior of Indonesian social media users will be the key to success in developing and maintaining a diverse and rapidly growing consumer base (Aripin, 2021).

Social media has become an integral part of daily life in today's digital era, with society widely adopting these platforms as the main means of communicating, sharing experiences and obtaining information (Ardiyansyah et al, 2023). The hospitality industry is no exception, which has recognized the incredible potential of social media as an effective marketing tool. By utilizing various popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others, hotels can now strategically increase their visibility, attract the interest of potential consumers, and build a dedicated community (Sya'idah & jauhari, 2022). With the increasingly unavoidable existence of social media, efforts to optimize social media marketing strategies are considered crucial in navigating this increasingly digital and connected business world (Fatihudin & Firmansyah, 2019).

Social media marketing has become one of the key strategies for the hotel industry in building strong relationships with potential consumers. Through interesting and relevant content, such as stunning photos of hotel facilities, special offers, positive reviews from previous guests, and various interesting activities that can be done around the hotel location, hotels can effectively attract the attention of their audience (Awali & Astuti, 2021). By leveraging the unique features of social media platforms, such as live streaming, story sharing, or clever use of hashtags, hotels can expand their reach and build dedicated and engaged communities (Kurniawan et al., 2018). Social media marketing not only helps in increasing brand awareness, but also allows hotels to interact directly with their consumers, obtain valuable feedback, and provide engaging experiences for their potential guests (Evans et al., 2021).

The main problem that can be identified is how hotels in Bandung City currently utilize social media as an effective marketing tool. The objectives of this research may include understanding the marketing strategies used by hotels in the city of Bandung on various social media platforms, evaluating the effectiveness of the marketing strategies used in attracting the interest of potential guests, as well as offering specific recommendations to increase engagement and conversion through the effective use of social media. more effective. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide an in-depth understanding of hotel marketing practices in the digital era and provide useful guidance for the hotel industry in the city of Bandung, and more broadly can provide valuable insight for the hotel industry in Indonesia.

Literature Review

Social Media Marketing

According to Dwivedi et al (2015) social media marketing consists of efforts to use social media to persuade consumers of a company, product or service which means, social

media marketing is marketing that uses online communities, social networks, marketing blogs and others. Social media marketing is a form of online advertising that uses the cultural context of social communities including social networks, virtual worlds, social news sites, and social opinion sharing sites to meet communication goals (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018). Top of Form

With social media marketing, it makes it easier for business people to interact with their customers online. The costs incurred are not too large and there is no time limit as long as you are connected to the internet (Hendrayati & Nurwulandari, 2022). Social media plays a role in company marketing activities, forming individual relationships with customers and giving companies the opportunity to access customers (Heggde & Shainesh, 2018)). With the generalization of social media across society, researchers have studied social media use by investigating why they use social media, how much time they use it, and the amount used in a certain time period.

Hospitality Industry

King (2011) states that friendliness is the behavior that customers prefer when staying in a hotel. Second, hospitality requires the host to be interactive and in contact with customers. Thirdly, it consists of intangible and tangible factors and finally, the host must provide the customer with a sense of security and comfort and it is also recommended that the friendly behavior should only be motivated by a genuine desire to take care of the customer and should not be motivated by egotism to impress the customer or in the hope of being compensated with tips.

Jett. (2010) stated that the hotel industry is one of the industries with the fastest growth rate and is one of the industries that employs the most workers. Everyone can qualify and be part of the hospitality industry although not everyone can take the same path. Tesone, D. (2010) states that the hospitality industry includes services such as lodging, food services, recreation, entertainment, fitness and MICE.

METHOD

In this research, the author chose to use a qualitative approach (qualitative research approach). By using this approach, the author can obtain detailed information from the various parties involved, as well as reveal facts according to the circumstances or social situations that occur in the field (Moleong, 2014). This research aims to provide an in-depth description of hotel marketing practices in the city of Bandung. To support this research, the author collected primary data through an interview process, allowing the author to gain direct insight from relevant stakeholders. Apart from that, secondary data was also used, including direct observation at each relevant agency and collection of research-related documents. In analyzing the data, the author applies data analysis techniques such as data condensation, presenting information, and drawing conclusions, following the approach introduced by Miles & Huberman (1994). Thus, the qualitative method applied in this research is expected to provide rich and in-depth insight into the use of social media in hotel marketing in the city of Bandung.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The importance of social media in influencing consumer behavior cannot be underestimated, especially in the hospitality industry. With society increasingly reliant on online platforms for information, reviews and recommendations, hotels must proactively address this influence. Social media not only facilitates communication between hotels and potential guests, but also provides an important platform for guests to share their experiences directly. As a result, reviews, opinions and feedback spread via social media have a significant impact on a hotel's image and reputation, playing a central role in the decision-making process of potential guests. In line with this trend, 49% of hoteliers admit that social media has become one of their most important sales and marketing strategies, highlighting the urgent need to design careful and effective strategies to exploit the marketing potential contained in these social media platforms .

Awareness of the importance of social media as a marketing tool not only impacts direct interactions with guests, but also on a hotel's overall strategy, including brand development, sales promotions and reputation management. Hotels must actively manage their presence on various social media platforms, with the aim of not only attracting new guests, but also maintaining the loyalty of existing guests. Implementing a strategy that focuses on engaging content, responsive interactions, and leveraging special features of various social media platforms is critical to creating meaningful engagement with an increasingly digitally connected audience. Therefore, understanding and developing social media-focused marketing strategies has become a top priority for the hospitality industry, recognizing the vital role these platforms play in shaping overall guest perceptions and experiences.

The hospitality industry has long been known as the guardian of unforgettable experiences for guests, where every personal touch and quality of service are the main determinants of consumer satisfaction. Hospitality brands not only offer temporary accommodation, but are also committed to providing a luxurious atmosphere, outstanding service, and experiences that exceed expectations. A hotel is not just a place to stay, but a destination that provides luxury, satisfaction and joy for guests who seek it. Amid increasing competition, it is important for hospitality brands to ensure that every touchpoint with customers, from booking to stay, offers an exceptional and unforgettable experience.

In the effort to achieve and maintain high standards of service, social media has become an invaluable tool for the hospitality industry. These platforms enable hotels to interact directly with potential and existing guests, enabling them to offer more responsive service, more accurate information, and quicker responses to needs and feedback. By utilizing social media effectively, hotels can develop deeper engagement with their customers, strengthen customer retention, and enhance their brand image through positive engagement and direct interactions. Therefore, a social media-focused marketing strategy not only provides an opportunity for hotels to increase their brand presence online, but also helps them in meeting the expectations and desires of increasingly connected and diverse guests.

The benefits of social media for hospitality businesses come in many forms, from increasing brand awareness and increasing customer engagement to managing brand reputation and generating leads. In this article we will discuss the six main benefits.

1) Increased Awareness

In the ever-evolving digital era, social media has become one of the most powerful tools for hospitality brands in creating and maintaining strong relationships with their customers. By leveraging modern word-of-mouth marketing strategies, customers can easily discover and interact with hospitality brands via social media platforms. They see social media as a credible source for obtaining more information about the brand, while taking other people's reviews and experiences into account. For hospitality brands, which rely heavily on online reviews and recommendations, social media has become a critical window that allows these brands to build a solid reputation and expand their customer base.

When facing increasingly complex marketing challenges, social media plays a major role in disseminating information quickly and efficiently to a wide and diverse audience. Hospitality brands are able to reach customers and potential customers who cannot be reached through traditional channels such as broadcast television, print or local advertising. By delivering high-quality content, such as engaging professional videos or impressive photography, via busy social media platforms, hospitality brands can increase awareness of the products, services, amenities, promotions and events they offer. With the ability to share content directly to a broad and diversified audience, social media provides hospitality brands with the opportunity to expand their reach, strengthen bonds with customers, and build a strong, engaging brand image. Thus, it is important for hospitality brands to smartly utilize the marketing potential contained in social media to maintain their competitive edge in an increasingly competitive industry.

2) Customer engagement metrics

Increasing customer engagement is crucial for hospitality brands in their efforts to build strong and sustainable relationships with their consumers. One of the best ways to increase engagement is to actively participate in conversations with customers, whether that's through comments, private messages, or direct responses to reviews or questions asked by customers. By showing interest and attention to customers' needs and experiences, hospitality brands can create more personal and meaningful connections, which can then encourage customers to share brand posts, tag friends, and participate in conversations more actively. Through this active engagement, hospitality brands can build engaged online communities, create positive buzz around their business, and overall strengthen customer engagement and increase word of mouth.

In addition to engaging in conversations, hospitality brands can also increase customer engagement through interactive and engaging content. Through features like live video streaming, giveaways, and exciting promotions, brands can capture customers' attention and encourage active participation from them. By providing prizes or rewards to actively engaged customers, hospitality brands can create incentives that encourage customers to stay engaged and continuously engaged. Additionally, by ensuring customer questions are answered quickly and efficiently, brands can build customer trust and loyalty,

which in turn can increase the likelihood of customers returning to purchase or stay at their hotel in the future. By focusing on positive and responsive interactions, hospitality brands can create positive and satisfying customer experiences, which can ultimately help strengthen brand image and increase overall customer satisfaction. Thus, effective customer engagement through social media is not just about promoting a brand, but also about building strong and sustainable relationships with customers who continue to invest in that brand experience.

3) Competitive advantage

Through the use of social media, hospitality brands have successfully leveraged data and feedback from these platforms to improve their operational processes and enhance the overall customer experience. In an industry that relies heavily on customer loyalty, social media has opened up opportunities for hospitality brands to build engagement and exposure by maintaining ongoing interactions with customers, as well as showcasing their special and unique offers. International Tourism Research Center findings show that 88% of travel marketers actively use social media to promote their offerings and understand the evolving needs of their customers, underscoring the importance of leveraging social media as a critical tool in achieving marketing success and understanding the market better.

Active and social listening for hospitality brands has become critical in ensuring that they remain relevant and responsive to customer needs and changing market demands. Through social media, hospitality brands can not only monitor their customers' behavior and preferences, but also observe the strategies used by their competitors. This information can then be used to inform and develop effective marketing strategies, ensuring that the products and services on offer remain relevant and attractive to increasingly connected and discerning customers. By paying attention to competitors, hospitality brands can gain valuable insight into industry trends, evaluate the successes and failures of specific marketing strategies, and ultimately develop more adaptive and innovative approaches to meeting their customers' needs. Thus, social media has become a tool that not only allows hospitality brands to connect with their customers in a more intimate way, but also helps them to stay at the forefront of the ever-increasing competition in the hospitality industry.

4) Targeted Advertising

In an era of increasingly sophisticated digital marketing, social media marketing has enabled hospitality brands to effectively reach the right potential customers according to their interests and demographic information. Through targeted advertising features available on various social media platforms, hospitality brands can optimize their advertising campaigns by selecting specific audiences based on criteria such as age, income, location, language, gender, interests and hobbies, thereby ensuring that their advertising appeals to the people who are most likely to be interested in the products or services they offer. By utilizing targeted advertising, hospitality brands can reduce their advertising costs while increasing the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns, serving relevant and engaging messages to relevant audiences.

In addition to the ability to target the right audience, ad tracking tools play an important role in helping hospitality brands measure the success of their advertising campaigns and identify responses from their audience. By using the analytics tools

available on social media platforms, brands can track and analyze their advertising performance, understand consumer trends, as well as evaluate important metrics such as conversion rates, engagement, and brand awareness. This information provides valuable insights to hospitality brands, enabling them to make necessary adjustments in their marketing strategies, as well as improving the effectiveness of subsequent campaigns. Thus, social media marketing not only provides a platform for hospitality brands to reach relevant audiences, but also allows them to continuously improve their marketing strategies based on measurable data and information.

5) Reputation Management

In the ever-evolving digital era, negative comments and reviews spread on social media can quickly damage a brand's reputation, especially in the hospitality industry which relies heavily on superior customer experience and service. Reputation management is becoming an important part of a social media marketing strategy, allowing hospitality brands to proactively monitor and manage every review, comment or post related to their brand online. In this context, responding timely and effectively to negative comments becomes crucial in ensuring that public perception of the brand remains positive and trustworthy. By ensuring that any customer issues or complaints are handled well and responsively, hospitality brands can build strong relationships with customers, improve their online reputation, and maintain a strong and positive brand image among competitors.

More than just improving your online reputation, having a positive brand reputation has been proven to increase a customer's level of trust and willingness to choose an experience or service. In the hotel industry, a positive reputation can significantly influence customer decisions, with travelers tending to choose hotels with better reviews than competitors in the same price range. Therefore, maintaining positive and responsive mentions on social media becomes an important part of a successful social media marketing strategy, ensuring that hospitality brands can continue to maintain customer trust and attract interest from potential leads. Thus, effective reputation management on social media not only protects brands from the negative impact of comments or reviews, but also helps them to strengthen a positive and attractive brand image in the minds of consumers.

6) Increased orders and sales

Effective use of social media in the hospitality industry is not only useful for increasing brand visibility, but also plays an important role in encouraging deeper interactions between brands and their audiences. By displaying engaging and informative content, hotels and resorts can capture the attention of potential customers, inviting them to explore the offerings and services provided. Through targeted marketing campaigns, such as special promotions, limited offers, or unique experiences, social media can be an efficient means of building interest and enthusiasm among customers, encouraging them to take action such as ordering or purchasing.

In addition to engaging content, a seamless user experience from social media to the booking website is a crucial element in converting interest into real transactions. By ensuring that customers can easily transition from content viewed on social media platforms to a simple and efficient booking process on the website, hospitality brands can

increase the likelihood of conversion and increase overall sales levels. Thus, using social media as a strategic marketing tool can help hospitality brands to expand their reach, build engagement with customers, and ultimately increase their business success in an increasingly competitive industry.

CONCLUSION

The use of social media as an effective marketing strategy has become an important key for the hotel industry in developing and maintaining their brand presence amidst increasingly fierce competition. By leveraging social media, hospitality brands can leverage a variety of tools, including targeted advertising, reputation management, and high-quality content, to capture customer attention, increase engagement, and drive increased bookings and sales. In optimizing the use of social media, it is important for hospitality brands to ensure that interactions with customers remain responsive, positive and informative, as well as ensure that the user journey from social media to the booking platform runs smoothly. Thus, social media is not only a powerful marketing tool, but also an important tool in building strong relationships between hospitality brands and their customers, generating extraordinary experiences and creating unforgettable impressions for users.

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