CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY ON INSTAGRAM TO INCREASE BRAND AWARENESS AT HOTEL X DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to formulate the right content marketing strategy on Instagram to increase brand awareness at Hotel X during the COVID-19 pandemic. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method that focuses on Instagram with interviews and documentation as the data collection techniques. The data analysis technique was data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and the validity was tested using triangulation method. The results of this study are Hotel X has implemented 7 steps of content marketing, namely: setting goals, mapping target markets, initiating and planning content, creating content, distributing content, strengthening content, and evaluating content marketing. The right content marketing strategy on Instagram to increase Hotel X brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic is the seven steps of content marketing that have been implemented by Hotel X and need to add the eighth step of content marketing, which is content marketing improvement. Hotel X needs to add the content marketing improvement by attending training related to content marketing that expected to maximize the implementation of content marketing strategies on Instagram to increase brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Content Marketing, Instagram, Social Media

Introduction

The world was shaken by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus which started in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 which then spread rapidly throughout the world in early 2020. On March 11, 2020 WHO (World Health Organization) finally declared COVID-19 as global pandemic (Utami & Kafabih, 2021). To maintain its existence, the company carries out its marketing activities through social media. Moriansyah (2015) states that social media is a very powerful marketing communication tool because it has wide-reaching communication skills, the ability to share information, and the ability to transcend geographical boundaries. According to Gunawan (2020) social media is the most effective form of establishing and building relationships with consumers. According to Hutter et al. (2013) social media is one way to inform consumers about a brand and thereby increase brand awareness. This is supported by the opinion of Sofiani (2020) which states that marketing through social media has offered a variety of new opportunities for companies to promote their brands, products and services and has become a marketing tool to increase brand awareness.

According to research conducted by Pertiwi and Gusfa (2018) it is known that content marketing carried out on the Kalbis Institute Instagram account can influence the formation of brand awareness by 86.6% which refers to the factors for making content marketing interesting and creative. Brand awareness is the ability of potential buyers to recognize and remember a brand as part of a certain product category (Sofiani, 2020). Consumers tend to buy goods and services from brands that are easily recognized and trusted. Therefore, it is very likely that consumers will buy products from the brand that first comes to mind (Oktaviani & Rustandi, 2018). The level of brand awareness on Instagram can be measured accurately using user reaction metrics such as the number of likes, comments and shares on uploaded content (Bylock and Lidberg, 2018). To generate positive reactions from Instagram users, companies need to create a content marketing strategy that can capture the interest and engagement of their customers. According to Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2019) content marketing is a way to do marketing with the aim of creating, selecting, and sharing content that is interesting, relevant, and according to consumer needs. This is in line with the opinion of Dasuki and Wahid (2020) who state that content marketing is not a strategy to market products and services directly, but rather content creation efforts that aim to encourage consumers to make purchases.

Hotel X is a three stars hotel located in the Old Town area of Surabaya which combines colonial design with modern conveniences. Hotel X uses Instagram for increasing brand awareness, building guest relationships, promotions, branding and corporate publicity purposes. To make sure Hotel X brand will still be remembered by customers in 2021, the hotel is creating content about the application of CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, & Environment Sustainability), creating quiz content using Instagram Stories regarding employee vaccination status, health protocols, and answering questions related to check-in procedures during PPKM (Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat). To find out the development of brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hotel X refers to social media targets which include the target number of followers and the target number of responses from Instagram account. Every month the number of Hotel X's Instagram followers is recapitulated to find out whether it has met the target of 250 new followers per month. In Table 1.1 it can be seen the exposure to the number of followers of Hotel X's Instagram account for the period January to December 2021 which shows that the target number of Instagram followers was only reached in January.

Table 1.1
Number of Hotel X's Instagram Followers in 2021

Month	Target Followers	Realization Follower	Difference Follower	Growth Follower (%)
January	2.285	2.315	30	-
February	2.535	2.346	(189)	1,33
March	2.785	2.371	(414)	1,06
April	3.035	2.440	(595)	2,91
May	3.285	2.508	(777)	2,78

June	3.535	2.552	(983)	1,75
July	3.785	2.572	(1.213)	0,78
August	4.035	2.612	(1.423)	1,55
September	4.285	2.649	(1.636)	1,41
October	4.535	2.666	(1.869)	0,64
November	4.785	2.695	(2.090)	1,08
December	5.035	2.722	(2.313)	1

[Source: Cluster Marcomm Manager Hotel X]

Every month, the number of follower responses on Instagram Hotel X is recapitulated to find out whether it has met the response target of 15% of total Instagram followers. Content interaction realization data is obtained from the amount of content interaction provided by Instagram Insight in the form of a combination of likes, comments, shares, and saves for the content created. In Table 1.2 it can be seen that the number of responses from Instagram Hotel X account followers for the period January to December 2021 has met the response target of 15% only in August and September.

Table 1.2
Number of Responses of Hotel X's Instagram Followers in 2021

Month	Instagram Followers	Target Content Interaction	Realization Content Interaction	Realization Content Interaction (%)	Difference Content Interaction (%)
January	2.315	347,25	0	0	(15)
February	2.346	351,9	219	9,33	(5,67)
March	2.371	355,65	244	10,29	(4,71)
April	2.440	366	328	13,44	(1,56)
May	2.508	376,2	314	12,51	(2,49)
June	2.552	382,8	343	13,44	(1,56)
July	2.572	385,8	256	9,95	(5,05)
August	2.612	391,8	399	15,27	0,27
September	2.649	397,35	521	19,66	4,66
October	2.666	399,9	211	7,91	(7,09)
November	2.695	404,25	341	12,63	(2,37)
December	2.722	408,3	138	5,06	(9,94)

[Source: Cluster Marcomm Manager Hotel X]

Hotel X reservations during the pandemic came from DM (Direct Message) on Instagram and via the Whatsapp number listed in the promotional content upload and the link in the Instagram bio. The content marketing strategy to increase brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic is to create a content calendar. The content calendar does not have a detail breakdown but is created weekly and
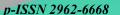
submitted in the annual marketing plan. Content uploaded to Hotel X's Instagram account comes from production by the creative team and Marketing Communications, and reposts from collaborations with influencers or content from hotel guests. When referring to Hotel X's Instagram uploads, it is known that the uploaded content seems monotonous because it is dominated by internally produced content and uploaded influencer content related to the F1 championship which is irrelevant to the promotion of owned accommodations or restaurants or the target audience. Hotel X's goal of collaborating with influencers is as a way to increase brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021 Hotel X has collaborated with @subianto.eko, @gaeljulienracing, @syafiradp, and @inijie. The owner of the @subianto.eko account is a hotel reviewer who lives in Surabaya, has 75,900 Instagram followers with content themes related to lifestyle, travel and food. Meanwhile, the owner of the @gaeljulienracing account is a French F4 racer with 2,046 Instagram followers and uploaded content related to F4 cars and championships. Influencers @syafiradp and @inijie did not upload collaborative content or tag Hotel X's Instagram account. Based on this explanation, it can be seen that the collaboration with influencers carried out by Hotel X is still not quite right because it does not meet the predetermined influencer criteria, namely having a minimum of 10,000 Instagram followers, content uploaded in accordance with the image of the hotel, and influencers living or actively creating content in Surabaya, other East Java areas, and also the Jabodetabek area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi).

Based on this explanation, research on "Content Marketing Strategy on Social Media to Increase Brand Awareness at Hotel X During the COVID-19 Pandemic" was conducted to further analyze the implementation of the content marketing strategy on Instagram social media currently being carried out by Hotel X. The results of this analysis are used to formulate a content marketing strategy through social media that is appropriate for implementation at Hotel X during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive analysis method with data collection techniques in the form of interviews and documentation which only focuses on the use of Instagram social media. Informants in the study were determined using a purposive sampling technique, which is determining informants based on certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2019). This consideration is in the form of informant characteristics that are in accordance with the problems and objectives of the research. The key informant in this study was a Senior Digital Marketing Manager at Hotel Y while the main informants of this study were Hotel Manager and Cluster Marcomm Manager Hotel X. Data analysis techniques used are data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. From the results of the data analysis, a data credibility test was carried out using the triangulation method which is a technique used to extract similar data using different methods.

In this study, triangulation method was carried out using interviews and documentation studies. The interview method was conducted with the main
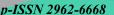
informant, namely the Hotel Manager and the Marcomm Cluster Manager of Hotel X, as well as the key informant namely the Senior Digital Marketing Manager at Hotel Y. The triangulation method was chosen to obtain correct, accurate information and a complete picture of content marketing strategy activities on social media to increase brand awareness at Hotel X during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of interviews with key informants were compared with the results of key informant interviews to check the truth of the information. Then the results of the interviews were adjusted with a documentary study originating from Hotel X's Instagram account to check the truth of the information.

Results and Discussion

The data presented in this study were obtained through semi-structured interview techniques. The question indicators in this interview refer to the eight steps of the content marketing strategies by Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2019), namely: setting goals, mapping target markets, initiating and planning content, creating content, distributing content, strengthening content, evaluating content marketing, and content marketing improvements. Based on the results of interviews with key informants and viewing content that was often uploaded on Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic, the type of content that is often uploaded on Hotel X's Instagram account during pandemic is mostly contents that complies with health protocols, easy to understand visually, and is the result of internal production by Marketing Communication. Hotel X's content marketing strategy to increase brand awareness during COVID-19 pandemic is to create content branding according to health protocols and to participate in the CHSE (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, & Environment Sustainability) certification program from the government. In planning the content, they have used a content calendar even though they do not yet have a clear and structured plan because it is only an outline of the content that will be created.

1. Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of the Implementation of Content Marketing Strategies on Social Media to Increase Brand Awareness at Hotel X During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

   a.   Setting goals

   According to Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2019) companies will be helped to create better content designs by defining their content marketing objectives. Goals in content marketing are divided into two categories, namely sales-related goals (sales-closing, cross-sell, up-sell, and sales referrals) and brand-related goals (brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty). If the goal is related to the brand, the company needs to ensure that the content is always consistent with the character of the company's brand, but if the goal is related to sales, the company needs to ensure that its content distribution channels are aligned with the sales channel. Hotel X already has goals related to sales, which is sales-closing and goals related to brands, namely to increase brand awareness, build relationships with guests, branding, and publication purposes.

   b. Target market mapping

   After setting goals, the next thing to do is determine the customer group you want to target. To create content effectively it is very important to know how each

group interacts on social media and divide groups based on geography, demographics, psychographics and behavior (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2019). The target audience for Instagram Hotel X has been grouped based on geography, which is domestic tourists, demographically, which is the audience aged 21-65 years and over with a percentage of 60% women and 40% men, psychographically, namely the audience who have an interest in traveling, staycation, leisure trips, business meetings , and wedding, and in terms of behavior, the hotel focus on Instagram trends in Surabaya.

c. Content idea and planning

According to Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2019) to achieve successful content marketing, it requires a combination of relevant themes, suitable content formats such as design aspects, color selection, solid narratives, and content calendars. To find the right theme ideas, there are two things to consider, namely: content must be relevant to customers and effective content must have a story that reflects the company's brand identity. The type of content that is often uploaded to Hotel X's Instagram account during a pandemic is mostly in the form of content that complies with health protocols and is easy to understand visually so that there is relevance between the situation during the pandemic and customers. The uploaded content is not optimal because most of it is in the form of internally produced content and the content that is reposted has nothing to do with accommodation or promotion of Hotel X. The hotel already using a content calendar but it does not have a clear and structured plan because it is only an outline of the content to be made and does not have a breakdown of the day but is made on a weekly basis and submitted in the annual marketing plan. From the design aspect and the selection of fonts and colors all are according to brand guidelines, for example a hotel logo that is green on a certain background can use other colors such as black and white which are placed on the top right.

d. Content creation

According to Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2019) content creation is the most important step in a content marketing strategy and is an ongoing process that requires consistency. Companies need to ensure that they have internal capabilities that support long-term content creation. If the company feels it is unable, it should consider obtaining external content, for example using customer-generated content or using professional services such as: journalists, scriptwriters, photographers and videographers. Hotel X's Instagram content is the result of internal production by Marketing Communication in the form of informative content based on applicable health protocols in accordance with corporate and government brand directives.

e. Content distribution

According to Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2019) having quality content is meaningless if it cannot reach the intended target, so companies need to choose the right media channels to distribute their content, namely: owned media, paid media channel), and media earned (earned channel). The most appropriate media used to get new consumers and increase brand awareness is paid media (paid channel), which is media paid by companies to distribute their content which includes electronic media advertising, print media, media in public places, and digital media such as social media advertisements. . Then, in order to increase the

interaction and response of Instagram followers, it is best to upload content during the "golden hour" which can be seen from Instagram Insight. Hotel X already uses owned channels in the form of Feeds, Reels and Instagram Stories, uses paid channels in the form of Meta Ads, and uploads content during the golden hour based on Instagram Insight, namely at: 07:00-09:00, 12:00-15: 00, and 17:00-21:00.

f. Content reinforcement

To be able to strengthen content distribution, it is important to build relationships and reciprocal relationships that involve influencers or communities in sharing company content. If content can reach people who have great influence or are respected figures, then there is a possibility that the content will go viral and can be distributed more widely (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2019). Referring to the results of the interviews, the influencers who have been invited to collaborate by Hotel X in 2021 are @gaeljulienracing, @subianto.eko, @syafiradp, and @inijie and have been re-uploaded on Feed and Instagram Story. However, in the feed of Hotel X's Instagram account, it can be seen that the only influencer whose content has been re-uploaded after collaborating is @gaeljulienracing. The owner of the @gaeljulienracing account is a French F4 racer with 2,046 Instagram followers and uploaded content related to F4 cars and championships so it doesn't fit the criteria. Meanwhile, the influencer account @subianto.eko which is seen uploading and linking the Instagram Hotel X account with regard to content showing Hotel X accommodation and restaurants is not reposted (reposted) on Hotel X's Instagram account. Even though the account owner @subianto.eko is a hotel reviewer who lives in Surabaya, has 75,900 Instagram followers with content themes related to lifestyle, travel, and food that are very suitable for Hotel X's influencer criteria. influencers @syafiradp and @inijie. In addition, the two influencers also did not upload collaborative content or link Hotel X's Instagram accounts. Therefore, it can be seen that Hotel X has not been able to select influencers according to predetermined criteria, namely: having a minimum of 10,000 Instagram followers, uploaded content in accordance with hotel image, and influencers living or actively creating content in Surabaya, other East Java areas, and also the Jabodetabek area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi).

g. Content marketing evaluation

To see the success of the content that has been created, the evaluation stage after the content is distributed is an important step to take by looking at the performance of existing strategies and tactics. Strategically, the evaluation is carried out based on the suitability between the content and the objectives that have been set, and tactically, the evaluation is carried out by looking at content marketing metrics consisting of media formats and channels that have been created (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2019). Strategically, Hotel X evaluates with reference to Instagram social media targets which are considered to have an impact on revenue. Tactically, do an evaluation by seeing that Hotel X has become widely known through Instagram.

h. Content marketing improvements

Human resource skills should be the main focus to be developed by participating in workshops and training in related fields such as communication, graphic design, journalism, social media strategy, photography classes, and others

(Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2019). Hotel X's management has never participated in training related to content marketing on Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out the latest trends related to content marketing on Instagram social media, Hotel X's management conducts research and analysis related to market conditions and developing trends through news on TV, viral shows on TV, and Instagram content that shows the wishes of current netizens by keep in mind the brand guidelines.

2.   Content Marketing Strategy on Social Media to Increase Brand Awareness at Hotel X During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

a.   Setting goals

Using a special promo code for reservations so that hotels can find out the amount of revenue sourced from Instagram social media.

b.   Target market mapping

Hotel X must focus on the audience that has the largest percentage on Instagram Insight, namely 25-34 years of age at 50.1% so that the content will be more relevant. Hotels should not only focus on social media trends in Surabaya but also find out social media trends in Indonesia and abroad.

c.   Content idea and planning

To be more focused, it is important for hotels to create monthly or at least weekly content calendars that include day details, prepare photos and videos accompanied by captions and considering the holidays season but still according to brand guidelines. The content calendar on social media is a framework used to plan content themes and deciding when is the right time to upload content on social media to facilitate the implementation of content marketing activities on social media.

d. Content creation

Creating creative and interesting content related to holidays and using external content in the form of reposts from influencers and hotel guests who tag Hotel X's Instagram in accordance with health protocols and brand guidelines.

e.   Content distribution

Paid advertisements must prioritize new products or certain promotions as well as content regarding unique selling points of hotels that are not owned by competitors. Hotel promotions through local Surabaya Instagram accounts are not only reposted via Instagram Story but also included in highlights so that they can be viewed again and need to be uploaded in Feeds and Reels.

f.   Content reinforcement

Following predetermined influencer criteria to be relevant to the identity and brand guidelines of the hotel's Instagram account. Content in collaboration with influencers is not only reposted via Instagram Story but is also included in highlights so that it can be viewed again and need. To be uploaded in Feeds and Reels.

g.   Content marketing evaluation

Apart from seeing the increase in the number of followers and the number of responses, the success of content marketing on Instagram can also be seen based on the number of audiences who ask questions via DM (Direct Messages) and can

be seen from impressions, which is how many followers or other accounts that can be reached by the contents.

h.   Content marketing improvements

Participate in training to provide new ideas in content marketing implementation, such as: creative writing, design, photography and videography, data analytics, and how to create effective advertisements.

Conclusions

In this conclusions, the objectives of the study are accomplished:

a.   To find out the implementation of content marketing on social media Instagram to increase brand awareness at Hotel X during the period the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of the eight existing content marketing steps, it can be concluded that Hotel X has carried out 7 content marketing steps on social media Instagram to increase brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The seven content marketing steps that have been carried out by Hotel X are: setting goals, mapping target markets, initiating and planning content, creating content, distributing content, strengthening content, and evaluating content marketing.

b.   To formulate a content marketing strategy on social media Instagram the right way to increase brand awareness at Hotel X during the COVID-19 pandemic. The right content marketing strategy on Instagram social media to increase Hotel X brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic is the seven steps of content marketing that have been carried out by Hotel X and added to the eighth step of content marketing, namely improving content marketing by attending training related to content marketing such as creative writing, design, photography, videography, data analytics, and how to create effective advertisements that are expected to maximize the implementation of content marketing strategies on Instagram social media.

Acknowledgement

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