

Analysis Of Marketing Public Relations Of Taman Lazuardi Tourism Park In Banyumas, Central Java Province, Indonesia To Increase tourist Visiting Interest By Means Of Social Media

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Abstract

Tourism based on local resource potentials are believed to be capable of driving self-sufficiency and welfare of village community. To steadily improve tourist attraction, promotional efforts conforming to technological advancement and society behavior are required, among which is social media platform. The research is aimed at examining the management of social media account of Taman Lazuardi in Susukan Village, Banyumas District, Central Java Province, Indonesia to increase tourist visiting interest. Data are collected using Focus Group Discussion, in-depth interview, and documentation, and analyzed using interactive data analysis. The result of which indicated that the management of social media account is not optimum yet and specific communication strategy to increase tourist visiting interest is still lacking, caused by phases of Marketing Public Relations (problem identification, planning and programming, action and communication, and governance evaluation) that are not yet performed by the management of Taman Lazuardi. To that end, assistance in preparing the system and human resources is required. Further, it is aimed at optimizing social media to be effectively utilized in marketing village tourism.

Keywords: Marketing Public Relations, Social Media, Local Tourism, Village, Rural Area, Visiting Interest

Introduction

The role of state in village development is indicated by the establishment of national development priority scale by means of National Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional/RPJMN) of 2015-2019 and 2020-2024. The effort to strengthen and develop regions and villages under the framework of minimizing the gap and ensuring even distribution is manifested in village fund policy. The policy is expected to assist 75,436 villages in Indonesia, or 89.87% of the entirety, to regions at the level of village/subdistrict/transmigration residential unit) in maximizing their potentials, in order to achieve the policy objectives, i.e. to improve public service, alleviate poverty, enhance village economy, address developmental gap, and empower villagers as development subjects.

Among the contents of village fund policy of 2021 is the improvement of BUMDES (Badan Usaha Milik Desa/Village-owned Enterprise) role to support the recovery of village economy and development of the existing priority sector, i.e. tourism development by means of tourist village development. This effort is expected to boost village income and people's welfare (Mutholib, et.al., 2019). Susukan Village is one of the villages in Sumbang Subdistrict, Banyumas District , Central

Java Province, Indonesia, which currently develops its local tourism potentials by establishing Taman Desa Lazuardi (Lazuardi Village Park). The park is located in the borders of Banyumas District and Purbalingga District. Offering the concept of educational and recreational site since 2019, the park is also providing playground and swimming pool.

Current promotional effort conducted by BUMDES Susukan as Taman Lazuardi management is pamphlete distribution in village government webpage. However, it is now considered necessary to utilize new media as the promotional means. In her research, Nuryanti (2019) specifically indicated that Susukan Village has a village webpage and its management team, but they are not particularly utilized to promote village potentials. Holmes (2005) conveyed the importance of new media due to its features, i.e. widespread reach, fast, interactive, and socially-integrated. Atiko, Sudrajat & Nasionalita (2019) asserted that tourism promotion can increase tourist visits through the strategy to utilize social media. This is in line with the view of Anindyanari, Widjanarko & Widodo (2021), that the management of social media content, in this case Instagram account, plays strategic role in introducing distinguished regional tourism potentials. In addition, Zakiah, et.al. (2020) conveyed that social media has the superiority as an effective media in disseminating information and promoting tourism.

An interesting aspect in the utilization of social media as promotional means is the need of communication approach, manifested in the availability of accountable information about a product and/or service. Haplan & Haenlein (2020) define social media as an internet-based application designed on ideological and technological basis, allowing message creation and exchange to take place.

Regarding that matter, Harris (1991) conveyed that communication of credible and impressive information may allow the development of relations between a company and the needs of its customers. The combination of willingness to market a product by means of information and relation building between a provider and its customers is known as Marketing Public Relations (MPR), a concept which Kotler (2002) asserted to be highly effective in building awareness and knowledge of a brand or product, both the established and new one. Ardianto (2009) views MPR as an effort to market product or service by developing a positive image to facilitate the effort to attract customers (Ardianto, 2009). MPR is also applied in developing tourist destination or tourist visiting interest. Several researches on local tourism applied the approach and indicated the importance of this perspective. Among them is the one by Wijaya, Waluya, and Septarini (2012), which stated that the decision to visit tourist destination is influenced by MPR. Similarly, a research by Sukmadi, Roesfian, and Purwanggono (2014) also conveyed that MPR can influence the image of tourist destination. The approach and image of tourist destination are also examined by Apriliyani (2019) in understanding the decision to visit forest tourist destination.

The description above encourages the researchers to apply MPR analysis approach in this research to examine the utilization of social media by BUMDES of Susukan Village. How is social media utilized as publicity means to increase tourist visiting interest? What is the strategy to optimally utilize social media to promote Taman Lazuardi?

Literature Study

Marketing Public Relations is an approach in public relations which emphasizes on the effort to improve the understanding of people – as customers or prospects – regarding a product and/or service. Harris (1991) conveyed that MPR is a process of program planning, execution, and evaluation to enhance customers' level of purchase and satisfaction by communicating credible and impressive

information to connect a company and its products with customers' needs, desires, concerns, and interests. MPR, as asserted by Ruslan (2007), is an effective means to establish identification and knowledge of a brand as well as to support its marketing. Furthermore, it reflects a number of marketing strategies, i.e. to advertise, build public opinion, and promote to stakeholders.

As indicated by Cutlip & Center (2006), there are four steps of planning public relations strategy in MPR, i.e. problem identification, planning and programming, action-taking, and program communication and evaluation. Kottler & Keller (2010) views MPR as a communication effort that is contradictory to the paid method where an organization or company promotes its products and/or services through publicity, identity, event, news, speech, and participation in social activity and sponsorship.

In this regard, Nagaraja and Aswathanarayana (2018) explain the corporate social responsibility practices in selected public limited companies at Bengaluru. In MPR context, social media develops well and has the potential in marketing a product (Papasolomou & Melantihou, 2012). Research by Pienrasmi (2015) indicates that today's public relations practitioners consistently use social media in supporting their activities as company communication function. With its information dissemination mechanism, social media is used as a means of company branding and marketing. It is also relatively effective in reaching specific audience based on demographic aspect and level of media utilization (Duffett, 2017). Laksamana (2018) asserted that social media takes part in influencing purchase intention and loyalty to a brand. However, Gulerman and Apayadin (2017) pointed out that the feature of digital device utilization for public relations will certainly be tailored to the diversity of customer characteristics. Thus, appropriate platform is required to improve corporate marketing performance.

Research Method

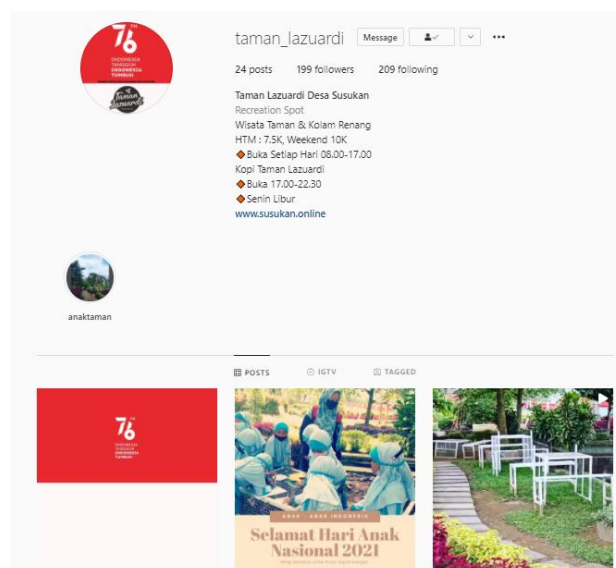
Qualitative method is applied in this research, with informants/research subjects comprise of village officials, management of Taman Lazuardi, and staff of BUMDES of Susukan Village, Sumbang Subdistrict, Banyumas District, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Object of this research is the utilization of social media. Primary data is obtained from focus group discussion and in-depth interview, while secondary data is obtained from exploration of social media and related literary reference. Analysis of qualitative data is conducted by means of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1992). Triangulation is conducted to ensure validity, by comparing data from observation result to interview result, and interview result to the content of related documents (Denzim, in Moleong, 2000).

Result and Discussion

Result

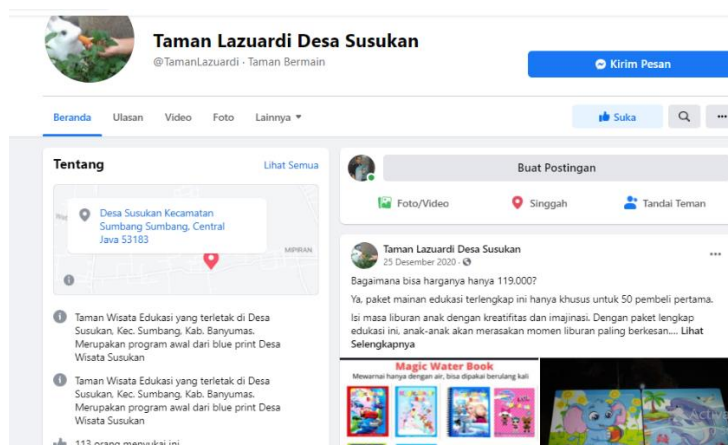
Currently, Taman Lazuardi has social media accounts in two platforms, @taman_lazuardi in Instagram and @TamanLazuardi di Facebook. In the profile of its Instagram account, it is stated that Taman Lazuardi is a tourist attraction with tourism park and swimming pool as the highlights. Other information displayed in the profile is its operating hours (8 AM – 5 PM), entrance fee (Rp7.500,00 on weekends and Rp10.000,00 on weekdays), as well as webpage and physical address. A coffee shop is operating at the venue from 5 PM – 10.30 PM.

Figure 1. @taman_lazuardi account in Instagram



In Facebook platform, the name used by the management is @TamanLazuardi with a brand as educational tourism park. The profile's account displays webpage address and contact number. It also displays the operating hours, 2 PM – 6 PM, which are intriguingly different from the ones displayed on its Instagram profile. The account's posts in Facebook mostly show the venue and visitors activity. However, more varied contents are found in its Instagram profile, which show external activities that are directly related to the park.

Figure 2. @TamanLazuardi account in Facebook



Further, there are two findings from this research regarding the utilization of social media to increase tourist visiting interest to Taman Lazuardi, i.e.: 1) management of social media account is still poor; and 2) communication strategy has yet to be applied to increase tourist visiting interest.

Poor management of social media accounts by Taman Lazuardi management is seen in the lack of concept/theme in the contents uploaded to both accounts above. Its Instagram account shows that from the first content (uploaded on September 25, 2020) to the last one (the 24th uploaded on August 17, 2021), there is no homogeneity, indicating that each of them is not organized under a

single thematic wholeness. There are six posts related to holidays, four posts on general information of the park, two product endorsement posts, one wise quote, and the others are photos and videos about the venue and visitors activities. Similar thing is seen in the park's Facebook account. Ever since it was created in February 2017, the theme of the posts are more personal without any institutional touch. Still from the same time frame, there are only fifteen posts up to the moment and no more posts were uploaded after December 2020. Its last post dates back to December 25, 2020, with a content about children toys on sale, that is not directly related to the park's main activity. The toys themselves are not derivative products of the park's core business. In addition, discontinuity of the posts indicate that the management of this social media account has yet to be optimized. This is firstly evident in the inconsistent interval of upload time and secondly in the posts update which was at the end of 2020 in the park's Facebook account.

Results from focus group discussion and in-depth interview with Taman Lazuardi management confirm the above-mentioned matter, that the park indeed has social media accounts. Unfortunately, they are not optimally managed yet due to some inactive period and have just been activated again. The management stated that the park's social media accounts are emphasized simply on their presence, without specific administration yet by a dedicated team. This certainly results in the lack of specific assignment to the park's employees, coordination regarding posts type and theme, as well as competence in administering social media accounts. In addition, research result indicates that although Taman Lazuardi is a potential tourist destination, it still lacks strategy to reach the customers. The reason behind this is the perception that visitors usually come only from nearby areas, in spite of the expectation that people from more distant areas might visit the park. Moreover, the management admitted that although they have target of visitor numbers, they do not have specific promotion mechanism yet, in terms of both schedule and concept. The problem lies in the lack of not only promotional budget (including of human resource to manage it), but also of knowledge and skill among the management to promote the presence of Taman Lazuardi to make it more widely known and be one of the options of tourist destination.

Discussion

Taman Lazuardi management essentially utilizes social media thanks to their awareness of the platform capability to provide information and promote tourist destination. However, they face problems of poor governance of social media account and lack of promotional communication strategy. MPR approach found that the problem lies in the processing phases that are not conducted yet and lack of specification in publicity strategy.

The first phase should be done by the management is problem identification, i.e. identifying unique features related to the product/service being offered. This identification includes product/service primacy, type of destination, data of current customers visit and projection of customer target, latest tourism trend, access to the venue, competition level of similar tourist destination, and communication media currently in use. Another important thing is to identify current customers' behavior in utilizing social media and potential customers to be aimed at, to avoid such utilization go in vain due to discrepancy in customers' behavior and planned measures.

The next phase not conducted yet by Taman Lazuardi management is planning and programming. Social media account is ideally managed by a dedicated team with capability in information technology, content production, and analysis of marketing communication, in order to create a systematic plan related to customers' and potential customers' lifestyle profiling and behavior

in using social media. Once established, it will be easier for the team to determine upload themes that are more attractive for the customers, as the themes are customised to the need and desire of potential visitors/customers. It is expected that it does not end on the uploads, but continues in the form of interaction in comments section, in order to establish the processes of outreaching and connecting that are potential to generate positive perception and loyalty to visit. In addition, consistency of theme, interval of upload time and social media characteristics are among the important aspects of the next phase as a manifestation of communication performance.

Further, evaluation phase is an integral part in managing social media account under MPR perspective. The management regularly monitors the outputs, i.e. uploads and audience response as seen in the comments and like or dislike marks for the posted uploads. Additionally, it is important to do a research of customers satisfaction, in relation to both the services provided in Taman Lazuardi and social media administrator's method in communicating with the audience. This is the basis for evaluation, in order for social media management to be focused on the effort to increase tourist visiting interest.

Through such process, in line with the view of Kottler and Keller (2010) that under MPR approach, promotional effort of a product/service conducted by a company can be of no charge, particularly by relying on publicity, i.e. the company's social media account. Additionally, its dynamic feature requires adaptation to audience characteristics. By referring to Gulerman and Apayadin (2017), management of social media account undoubtedly needs to be designed with specific effort based on destination and audience uniqueness, including focus on its marketing objective. Under such framework, Taman Lazuardi certainly needs to apply MPR principles in order that the effort to increase visiting interest through social media can be conducted using measurable, planned, and impactful optimization.

CONCLUSION

Social media utilization is inevitable in promoting tourism, including the one based on local resource. Its contemporaneity is accessible, accords with technological advancement, and accommodates human interaction space, allowing social media platform to be the potential instrument for marketing based on sustainable connectedness. To optimize it, particularly to increase tourist visiting interest, phases are required to define problems or needs, plan and develop management program, organize communication management, as well as sustainably monitor and evaluate.

Readiness of system and human resource is an integral part of the optimization. This is crucial to ensure that the specified social media management and communication strategy can work measurably based on utilization planning. Thus, assistance is required in the early phase, in terms of technical aspect in managing social media account, design of upload contents, and strategy to reach the audience. Another crucial matter is the importance of a specifically mandated team as well as its job description, ranging from aspect of production technique to output analysis to measure its effectiveness.

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