

MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, numerous businesses worldwide have been forced to suspend their operations. This is also the case in the tourism industry in Indonesia, where businesses are also suffering as a result of the economic downturn. One of the tourism establishments affected by the Covid-19 pandemic is the Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, which saw a reduction in room rental turnover of almost 70% during the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. Based on this occurrence, a marketing communication strategy is required in order to make decisions on how to survive and compete in the face of a pandemic. Thus this study aims to analyze and describe the marketing communication strategy of Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung in improving service in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic based on Integrated Marketing Communication theory. To fulfill the research aim, this study employs qualitative methodology using observations and interviews as the data collection techniques. Based on the findings from observations and discussions with informants regarding marketing strategy of the resort, it is found that that this procedure is a process requiring multiple stages, which is in line with the Integrated Marketing Communication theory. By shifting the marketing focus from traditional concept to digital concept and improving the digital marketing process itself, Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung is able to survive and compete in the tourism industry. The success of the marketing communication strategy used by Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung was attributed to its focus on gaining consumer trust.

Keyword: - Communication, Marketing communication, Marketing strategy, Tourism Industry

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-Cov-2 virus, which began in 2020, has had a negative impact on economies all over the world, including Indonesia. The tourism industry is also feeling the effects of this. Many resorts and hotels went bankrupt and were forced to restructure. The Grand Cempaka Resort in Bogor, West Java Province, Indonesia, is one of them. The resort, which is located in Puncak, a popular tourist area, has seen a decrease in turnover due to a decrease in tourist visits. The resort claimed a 55% drop in turnover during the pandemic in 2020 compared to the previous year. Because of the decline in turnover, the Grand Cempaka Resort has been forced to implement an integrated marketing communication strategy in order to survive and regain the trust of tourists. Prior to the pandemic, the resort's marketing communication strategy relied on traditional marketing tactics, according to the resort. This includes advertising, sales promotion, direct mail, sponsorship, and personal selling, according to the resort [1], [2]. Despite the challenges, the management of Grand Cempaka Resort has implemented all of the Integrated Marketing Communications strategies. These issues prompted the resort management to reconsider the Grand Cempaka Resort's strategy. This step begins when the government imposes the enforcement of restrictions towards community activities (PPKM). Only 25–50 percent of resorts and hotels are permitted to receive tourist visits. This strategy's evaluation is expected to result in an increase in turnover for the Grand Cempaka Resort lodging business.

A communication strategy is the method of carrying out the objectives of a communication plan [3]. There are clear goals and stages—clear steps to achieve this goal—by having clear goals and having stages in the process of achieving these goals, such as communication planning carried out by the resort. Marketing communication is a process in which companies communicate with consumers in a persuasive manner in order to persuade them to purchase the products or services offered [4], [5]. Direct mail, sales promotion, advertising, sponsorship, and e-mail personal selling are the five functions of marketing communication [1], [2]. The five functions of marketing communication are interconnected to assist a company in the marketing process. Marketing communication is required as a strategy for achieving broad segmentation. The process of marketing information communication is the most important thing as an activity that allows companies and their audiences to communicate with one another [6]-[9]. Integrated Marketing Communication is one of the marketing communication strategies used (IMC). IMC is a marketing communication activity that aims to integrate advertising with other marketing communication tools such as public relations, direct marketing, and sales promotion [2].

Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung Puncak provides a variety of products and services to arouse interest and desire in purchasing a product in the form of resorts and inns at Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung Puncak, while also improving services in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic. One of the marketing communication strategies is Integrated Marketing Communication or IMC, which is a concept of marketing communication strategy that is more valuable than evaluating strategic roles in various communication disciplines such as general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations. IMC encompasses several marketing concepts, including: a) direct marketing; b) sales promotion; c) public relations; d) personal selling; e) advertising; and f) word-of-mouth marketing [10]. By utilizing the concept of marketing communication strategy, IMC can be displayed in resort and lodging products at the Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak Resort to improve services amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Marketing communication strategy with the added value of evaluating the strategic role of various communication disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact in customer product marketing.

In relation with the explanation above, it is important for this research to be conducted by looking at the problems of changing marketing communication strategies. Based on that, we have formulated the research questions as follows: 1) What is the marketing communication strategy for the Grand Cempaka Puncak Resort, Bogor?, 2) What are the factors supporting the marketing communication strategy of the Grand Cempaka Puncak Resort, Bogor?, and 3) What are the inhibiting factors for the marketing communication strategy of the Grand Cempaka Puncak Resort, Bogor. Following from the research questions, this study then aims to analyze and describe the marketing communication strategy of Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung in improving service in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic based on Integrated Marketing Communication theory.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employs qualitative methodology, more specifically descriptive qualitative method in the postpositivism paradigm. Data collection techniques obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Informants were chosen through purposive sampling, which is to find out who is competent by knowing more about the development of the resort. Resort personnel in charge of marketing i.e. marketing managers of Grand Cempaka Resort Megamendung are then chosen as the informants for this study, with customers of the resorts as informants for triangulation to ensure research credibility. Observations were made to find out the phenomena or problems that occur in the tourism industry in the Puncak Bogor area, especially the Grand Cempaka Resort as the object of research. The reason for choosing the resort is because the Grand Cempaka Resort is one of the business units of PT Jakarta Tourisindo, a regional government owned enterprise (BUMD) of the DKI Jakarta Province.

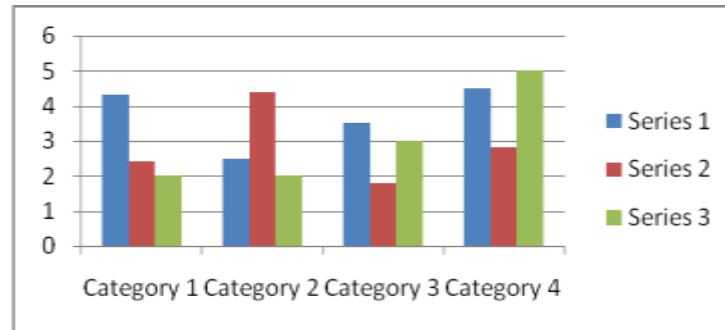


Chart -1(Font-10, Bold): Name of the chart (Font-10)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Marketing Communication Strategy for Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak Resort, Bogor during the pandemic

The process towards developing a company's marketing strategy at a macro level is a simple concept of marketing communications strategy. There are two planning patterns in the implementation, namely top-down and bottom-up marketing communication strategies. In the top-down marketing communication strategy, here the resort leadership has a dominant attitude in determining the goals of the company. such as the policy from the government that requires reducing the number of tourist visits during the pandemic. The manager of the resort must follow these regulations and inform his subordinates about the health protocol procedures. In contrast to the bottom-up marketing communication strategy. This strategy sees the company's vision and mission as the goals to be achieved. Grand Cempaka Resort has a clear vision and mission and is in accordance with what it wants to achieve. However, from this research, it is still not strong enough to maintain the principles of the company so that it seems that it does not have a fixed form and policy in making business plans. Regarding the theory of integrated marketing communication strategy of Grand Cempaka Resort, it is identified how each tactic is used by the resort as follows:

a. Product

The products offered by the resort to the visitors are detailed and friendly. The results of interviews from several visitors who came at that time, researchers got information that the products offered by the research party were in accordance with what they described and advertised through social media. Many visitors are satisfied with the quality of service.

The product strategy applied by the research party is to provide various kinds of services that can satisfy the visitors so they want to come back again to stay here. One of the services provided is by giving confidence to visitors that every day employees from the resort spray disinfectants as one of the procedural health protocols. All items in the room as well as facilities and infrastructure around the resort are always kept clean.

b. Price

Dealing with future opportunities and product performance there is a policy in determining the price. Pricing requires complex calculations because it relates to seasonality (holidays, business trips, and so on). Because pricing is part of a marketing strategy, determining prices during a pandemic is not easy. The research party must recalculate how many rooms are only allowed to be opened and how many visitors are allowed to come during the PPKM. The prices they offer can be said to be quite in accordance with the budgets of both domestic and foreign tourists. This is in accordance with the results of interviews from the resort which stated that the price offered by the resort was very low and in accordance with the budget for tourists who wanted to stay at their place. Likewise with the results of interviews with informants 2 and 3 which stated that the cost of staying here is cheap according to the facilities offered and the scenery around the resort is very good, suitable for a weekend with the family.

c. Place

Grand Cempaka Resort is located on Jalan Raya Puncak KM 17, Cisarua, Bogor, West Java. The location of the Grand Cempaka Resort is quite strategic because it is not far from several popular spots in Puncak. If tourists want to visit Matahari Tourist Park Bogor, the distance from the property is only about 1.95 km, while the trip to Indonesia Safari Park is around 10.08 km or a 10-minute drive. The results of interviews from informants 1,2,3 and

4 who stayed at the resort, Grand Cempaka Resort is a suitable property for vacationing with family. The reason given is that:

“...the accommodation has a cool environment, clean and comfortable. Another fun thing is that the manager has provided a camping ground, perfect for family gatherings or with friends.”

d. Promotion

The Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak Resort, Bogor has used all elements of marketing communication consisting of advertising, sales promotion, publicity, personal selling and direct marketing [11]. Results from interviews with informants 1 and 4 that the resort provides promotions:

“We have promotions for meeting room rentals and we also maximize it for family camping ground promos. All guests staying are free to swim in the waterboom and weekend kids games belonging to Grand Cempaka Resort and Convention Puncak.”

The purpose of the promotional activities that have been carried out is to inform tourists that the Grand Cempaka Resort is safe and provide promotions according to the travel services used.

3.2 Supporting Factors Marketing Communication Strategy Grand Cempaka Resort

The Grand Cempaka Resort carries out marketing communications with a well-planned strategy in accordance with the company's vision and mission. Beautiful scenery and low prices as well as friendly service make it a factor of excellence for the resort as a separate tourist attraction for tourists. In addition, based on informant 3 as a tourist:

“...the location of the resort was easy to reach, the facilities provided were: offered is also good, although there are still some facilities that are not kept clean.”

This is in contrast with informant 1 as the resort management who stated that the advantages of this resort are services and tourist objects that are close to the resort are factors that support excellence.

To be able to verify the opinions of the informants, the researcher re-checked other informants, namely Informant 2 and 4 who made comparisons with other resorts or hotels near the research location:

“The quality of service provided by the resort was very friendly and understood the wishes of visitors and at this resort for food is cheap too and cleanliness is very well maintained. The innkeepers here are perfect for staying with family.”

3.3 Inhibiting Factors Marketing Communication Strategy Grand Cempaka Resort

Re-developing a business during a pandemic is not easy. The resort experienced various kinds of obstacles, both internal and external. Based on interviews with the resort for internal barriers, namely changing policies and providing difficult decisions that must be conveyed to employees. Meanwhile, the external obstacle is the reduced number of visits from tourists and the need to adjust to the policies of the government.

It is seen from Chart-1 that the revenues of Grand Cempaka Resort experience decline ever since the pandemic started in 2020 to 2021 due to the reduced number of tourist visits.

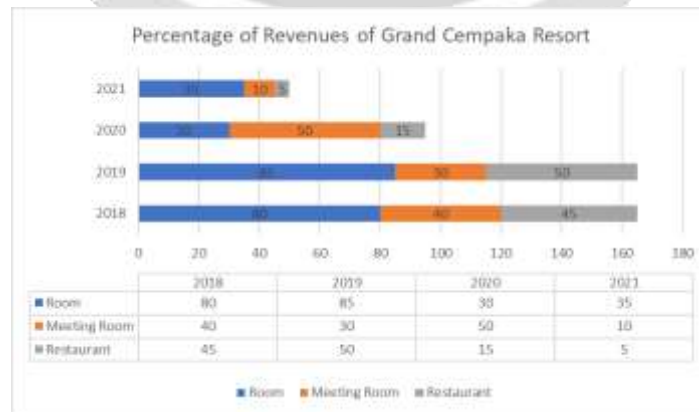


Chart -1: Percentage of Revenues of Grand Cempaka Resort before and during pandemic (2018-2021)

Adjustment to policy with the government which is considered by the resort to change the marketing communication strategy. This change must be taken and followed if a company wants to survive in the world of the tourism industry. The dominant marketing communication strategy was changed in this case by evaluating the price policy offered and fostering confidence in visitors who are staying at the Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Resort that the place is safe and health checks and disinfectant spraying are always carried out in accordance with health procedures.

In this case the researcher argues that the resort has not been able to give confidence to visitors to stay because there is still a lack of availability of human resources who plan and implement promotions with minimal fund allocations. Another obstacle found was the lack of synergy between the government and the lodging business players in the Puncak area, due to the lack of supervision from the government regarding the appeal given during the period of restrictions on community activities so as not to disadvantage the tourism businesses.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The process towards developing a company's marketing strategy on a macro basis is a simple concept of a marketing communications strategy. Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak Resort, Bogor has implemented an integrated marketing communication strategy as a strategic plan in accordance with the vision and mission of the resort. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, resorts must be able to survive in intense competition. For this reason, one of the marketing communication strategies is to maintain the supporting factors consisting of several good facilities and infrastructure and the quality of service and the friendly attitude given by resort employees to visitors. Although it cannot be separated from the factors that hinder the marketing communication strategy that tends to from the external side of the company, namely the absence of a solution from the government in the restriction of community activities (PPKM) period so that it always evaluates the strategies that have been carried out in order to gain trust or a good image from visitors.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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