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MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN THE CONDITION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many companies to close their production activities. As is the case in the tourism industry sector, which is also affected by the economic downturn. One of them is the Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Resort, Bogor-West Java, Indonesia, which experienced a decline in room rental turnover of around 70% during the covid 19 pandemic. Based on this phenomenon, a marketing communication strategy is needed to make decisions to survive and compete in the conditions of the covid pandemic. 19. This process requires several stages according to the results of observations and interviews with resource persons regarding marketing strategies at the resort. The success of the marketing communication strategy used by Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Resort by changing the marketing concept from traditional to digital and improving the digital marketing process by focusing on gaining the trust of consumers to survive and compete in the tourism sector.

Keywords : Communication, marketing communication, marketing strategy

1. Introduction

The spread of the COVID-19 virus in 2020 had a negative impact on the economy throughout the country, experiencing a decline. The number of companies that open businesses and carry out Termination of Employment (PHK) in order to survive in the industrial world has resulted in many movements everywhere.

This impact is also felt by the tourism industry sector. Many resorts and hotels went bankrupt and had to open businesses. One of them is the Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Resort, Puncak Bogor, which experienced a decline in turnover due to a decrease in visits from tourists. This resort is located in the Puncak area, Bogor which is a favorite area for tourists to vacation.

Based on the results of interviews with resource persons, namely the Resort Manager, that there was a decline in turnover of 55% during the pandemic in 2020 compared to before. This decline in turnover has forced the Grand Cempaka Resort to carry out an integrated marketing communication strategy in order to survive and gain the trust of tourists again.



Table 1 Income Percentage Data for Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak Resort, Bogor.



Source: Research Result Data

In addition, the resort also informed that prior to the pandemic, the marketing communication strategy carried out by the resort relied on advertising, sales promotion, direct mail, sponsorship and personal selling (C.B.M Van Riel, 1995; Faizah et al., 2019). In this case, all of the Integrated Marketing Communications strategies have been carried out by the management of Grand Cempaka, even though there are obstacles.

These problems made the resort party to evaluate the strategy carried out by the Grand Cempaka Resort. This step begins when the PPKM situation (Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities) is imposed by the government. Where resorts and hotels are allowed to receive visits from tourists only 25 - 50%. The evaluation of this strategy is expected to provide an increase in turnover for the Grand Cempaka Resort lodging business.

In connection with the explanation above, it is important for this research to be carried out by looking at the problems of changing marketing communication strategies. So that the problems in this research are formulated 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?. 3). What are the inhibiting factors for the marketing communication strategy of the Grand Cempaka Puncak Resort, Bogor?.

This research is expected to be useful for the development of communication science, especially in the study of marketing communications, theoretically and practically, it is hoped that it can provide input for the tourism office, especially the Grand Cempaka Megamendung resort, Puncak Bogor to get additional turnover during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this study will discuss the findings of research with linking to the theories of marketing communication strategies. The communication process is the existence of a medium as a transmission of information conveyed by the mind in the form of images, symbols, speech cues that are messages from the communicator to the communicant to receive the message by responding or reacting as feedback to the communicator (Suardi, 2016; Susanto, 2017).

Communication strategy is the process of achieving the goals of a communication plan (Cangara, 2009). By having clear goals and having stages in the process of achieving these goals as communication planning carried out by the resort, there are clear goals and stages – clear steps to achieve this goal.

Marketing communication is a communication process carried out by companies to consumers in a persuasive manner so that consumers want to buy the products/services offered (Anderson, 2001; Soedarsono et al., 2020). Marketing communication has five functions, namely direct mail, sales promotion, advertising, sponsorship, and e-mail personal selling (C.B.M Van Riel, 1995; Faizah et al., 2019). The five functions of marketing communication are interrelated with each other to help a company in the marketing process.

In achieving broad segmentation, a marketing communication is needed as a strategy. The process in marketing communication of information is the most important thing as an activity that allows companies and their audiences to have a dialogue (Ekalista & Tri Hardianto, 2019; Isnaini, 2004; Kusniadji, 2016; Muttaqin, 2012).

One of the marketing communication strategies implemented is Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). IMC is an activity that seeks to combine advertising with other marketing communication tools such as public relations, direct marketing, and sales promotion to function together (Faizah et al., 2019). Marketing communication strategies that need to be applied in a marketing products that will be offered to create an impulse of interest and desire in purchasing a product in the form of resorts and inns at Grand Cempaka Resort Mega Mendung Puncak in improving services amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic.

IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) which is one of the marketing communication strategies is a concept of marketing communication planning that has more value than evaluating strategic roles in various communication disciplines such as general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and Public Relations. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has several marketing concepts, namely: a). Direct Marketing; b). Sales Promotion; c). Public Relations; d). Personal Selling; e). Advertising; f). Word of Mouth Marketing. (Firmansyah, 2020).

IMC can be displayed in resort and lodging products at the Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak Resort in improving services amidst the Covid-19 pandemic by applying the concept of marketing communication planning. Marketing communication planning that introduces the added value of evaluating the strategic role of various communication disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact in product marketing to customers.

2. Research Methods

This research uses postpositivism paradigm (Gunawan, 2013). The research method uses the phenomenological method. This type of descriptive qualitative research. Data collection techniques obtained from observations, interviews, documentation, and combination/triangulation (Sugiyono, 2016). Determination of resource persons is done with a purposive sample system (Sugiyono, 2016). To find out who is competent by knowing more about the development of the resort. 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 Mega Mendung resort as the



1
object of research. The reason for choosing the resort as a tourist attraction is because the Grand Cempaka Resort is one of the business units of PT Jakarta Tourisindo, a BUMD of DKI Province.

3. Results and Discussion

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. Resort Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak, Bogor has a clear vision and mission and is in accordance with what it wants to achieve. However, from this research, the researcher sees that 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 with Resort. Marketing communication strategy Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Puncak, Bogor, then:

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



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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. The 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 Taman Wisata Matahari Bogor, the distance from the property is only about 1.95 km, while the trip to Taman Safari Indonesia is around 10.08 km or a 10-minute drive. The results of interviews from informants 1,2,3 and 4 who stayed, Resort Grand Cempaka is said to be a suitable property for vacationing with family. The reason is, this accommodation has a cool and 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 (Soemanagara, 2006). Results from interviews with informants 1 and 4 that the resort provides promos 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 Mega Mendung Puncak Bogor Resort is safe and provide promos according to the travel services used.

Supporting Factors Marketing Communication Strategy Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Resort, Puncak, Bogor.

The Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Resort, Puncak, Bogor 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 who said 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. In contrast to the opinion of informant 1 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 prove the opinions of the informants, the researcher re-checked other informants, namely 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.



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Inhibiting Factors Marketing Communication Strategy Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung Resort, Puncak, Bogor

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.

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 you want 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 that staying at the Grand Cempaka Mega Mendung resort 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 allocations. minimal funds. 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 PPKM and good solutions so as not to harm the lodging business.

4. Conclusion

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 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.

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