

KidZania Surabaya Marketing Communication Strategy in Increasing the Number of Visitors

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Abstract: This research aims to find out how the marketing communication strategy used by KidZania Surabaya increases the number of visitors. The competitive artificial tourism industry makes companies compete to win the hearts of their consumers. This makes it important to have a marketing communication strategy to increase sales for KidZania Surabaya. This research method uses a qualitative approach, while data collection techniques are obtained through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. The research results show that KidZania Surabaya has implemented various marketing communication strategies to increase the number of visitors. Several strategies are used, such as the use of conventional and digital media as a means of promotion and publication. Apart from that, KidZania Surabaya also collaborates with various parties such as educational institutions and government in the form of events that can increase public brand awareness and influence their interest and actions in purchasing tickets. Not only that, KidZania Surabaya also collaborates with various other companies to offer price promotions so that they can stimulate consumer purchases. The implementation of an integrated and innovative marketing communications strategy makes KidZania Surabaya able to compete with predetermined segmentations

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui tentang bagaimana strategi komunikasi pemasaran yang dilakukan KidZania Surabaya dalam meningkatkan jumlah pengunjung. Persaingan industri wisata buatan dan edukasi yang kompetitif membuat perusahaan berlomba-lomba memenangkan hati konsumennya. Hal ini menjadikan pentingnya strategi komunikasi pemasaran untuk meningkatkan penjualan bagi KidZania Surabaya. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, sedangkan teknik pengumpulan data didapatkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa KidZania Surabaya telah mengimplementasikan beragam strategi komunikasi pemasaran untuk meningkatkan jumlah pengunjung. Beberapa strategi yang dilakukan seperti penggunaan media konvensional maupun digital sebagai sarana promosi dan publikasi. Selain itu, KidZania Surabaya juga melakukan kerjasama dengan berbagai pihak seperti lembaga pendidikan dan pemerintahan dalam bentuk event yang dapat meningkatkan brand awareness masyarakat hingga mempengaruhi minat dan tindakan mereka untuk melakukan pembelian tiket. Tidak hanya itu, KidZania Surabaya juga bekerja sama dengan berbagai perusahaan lain untuk menawarkan promosi harga sehingga dapat merangsang pembelian konsumen. Penerapan strategi komunikasi pemasaran yang terpadu dan inovatif menjadikan KidZania Surabaya mampu bersaing dengan segmentasi yang telah ditentukan.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2020, the initial visitor count for KidZania Surabaya's opening was quite high. The following year, 2021, the number of visitors to KidZania Surabaya increased to 33,380. This high number was due to KidZania Surabaya's closure several times during that year due to the Surabaya City Government's Public Activity Restrictions (PPKM) regulations. The most recent record in 2023 was 72,571 visitors.

According to the company's website, KidZania Surabaya's visitor numbers have experienced declines in certain months. This decline was due to differences in promotional and marketing activities compared to the previous year, as well as intense competition in the tourism industry in Surabaya. This is consistent with other research that shows a decline in the number of domestic visitors to Surabaya tourist attractions (Rinugroho et al., 2015). Reindrawati (2020) stated that this decline was due to a less attractive tourist destination and inadequate marketing to attract tourists.

KidZania is one of many tourist attractions in Surabaya. With an indoor playground concept, KidZania Surabaya offers children a play area while simultaneously learning about adult occupations through role-playing (hands-on experience). The play area, also known as an establishment, is designed to resemble a small town, reminiscent of a real-life world. The play equipment also uses real professional tools, allowing children to learn how to use professional equipment in a fun, playful atmosphere.

As a play and educational facility, KidZania Surabaya targets children aged 4-16. However, it also offers opportunities for teenagers aged 17-21 to try out some special rides. In addition to tickets, KidZania Surabaya also offers birthday packages and building rentals for corporate events.

KidZania Surabaya is a playground located within a shopping center. However, it is not the only playground located within a shopping center. According to data from the Surabaya Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Agency (DPM-PTSP), there are at least 12 educational and family recreation facilities in Surabaya. The growing presence of the tourism industry in shopping centers is due to population growth and limited open space. Furthermore, shifts in consumer lifestyles seeking a comprehensive and integrated experience have led shopping centers to adapt by providing entertainment, socializing, and recreation all in one location (Larasati et al., 2020).

One entertainment concept in shopping centers can include playgrounds for children. The presence of playgrounds within shopping centers allows children to play while their parents shop. Furthermore, playgrounds offer play activities that can enhance children's cognitive, social, and physical development through a variety of games. Play is essential for children because it is the most effective means of learning (Fadlillah, 2022). Therefore, playgrounds can be a recreational destination choice for children while learning.

Competition in the playground industry is increasing. In fact, sometimes there are multiple playgrounds offering different concepts within a single shopping center. Besides KidZania Surabaya, one indoor playground is Kidzooona, which positions itself as a playground that supports children's growth and development through a variety of children's games. Unlike KidZania, Kidzooona's target consumers are children aged 0 to 12, ranging from toddlers to kindergarteners. Furthermore, Playtopia, with a similar concept to Kidzooona, is also a popular playground destination for residents of Surabaya. Playtopia also targets a different consumer base, specifically those aged 2 to 14, ranging from kindergarten to elementary school. Playtopia's playgrounds offer several more challenging children's games than Kidzooona's.

Although Surabaya offers numerous tourism options, the 2016-2021 Regional Medium-Long Term Development Plan (RJPMMD) notes that the number of tourist visits by tourist attraction is smaller than the number of tourist visits to Surabaya in 2010-2015. This is compounded by the challenges of the competitive tourism industry in East Java and the perception that Surabaya is less committed to developing tourist attractions than surrounding cities. For example, Malang boasts a

variety of major tourist attractions like Jatim Park, the Museum Angkut, and others. Furthermore, research by Sayangbatti (2013) shows that urban tourists generally prefer to visit tourist attractions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

KidZania Surabaya, a recreational and educational tourism industry for children, faces various challenges in the highly competitive tourism industry. The main challenges are high competition from other tourist destinations and consumer preferences for vacations outside the city. To win the market, KidZania Surabaya implements a tailored marketing communications strategy that differentiates itself from its competitors. This distinct marketing communications strategy is inseparable from KidZania's distinct segmentation and target audience.

KidZania Surabaya's segmentation is designed for the upper social class (B) and above, with its primary target being children aged 4-16. Meanwhile, KidZania positions itself as a professional adult education platform for children to differentiate itself from its competitors. Therefore, play and learning activities are designed around the independent curriculum in schools. Therefore, KidZania Surabaya collaborates with educational institutions, tourism institutions, and government agencies in implementing its marketing communications to expand its market reach and increase visitor numbers.

One form of partnership is collaboration with UM (State University of Malang) and several travel agents in East Java through personal selling. Personal selling is a form of marketing communication involving face-to-face interaction with potential customers (Kotler and Keller, 2016). In practice, these partners will offer KidZania Surabaya packages to their partners or customers.

UM and Travel were selected as partners based on the public's preference for recreational and educational activities outside the city. Meanwhile, KidZania does not have enough employees to directly reach customers outside Surabaya. Therefore, UM's strategic position with universities and schools is crucial for attracting their audience to KidZania. Furthermore, travel agents have the potential to influence tourists seeking a family vacation experience to visit KidZania. This collaboration has been successful in increasing sales, although it has not yielded significant results. This is due to a lack of effort to maintain relationships with UM and the travel agents.

Furthermore, collaboration with kindergarten and elementary school teachers involves monthly educational seminars. This also served as one of the sales group division's personal selling targets, enabling them to attend Family Welfare Movement (PKK), IGTKI (Indonesian Children's Welfare Movement), and K3S (School of Family Welfare) meetings. During these meetings, the sales group delivered presentations and offered educational seminars effectively by partnering with Key Opinion Leaders, the leaders of member groups. Additionally, the educational seminars offered snacks, a city tour (around KidZania), materials, and certificates for teacher promotions.

The main objective of these events was to attract teachers by providing firsthand experiences of exploring the play activities at KidZania Surabaya. By providing a memorable experience, it was hoped that this would influence teachers' decisions to organize field trips to KidZania. However, despite successfully generating interest in visiting KidZania, educational seminars did not always result in decisions to organize field trips to KidZania Surabaya.

One of KidZania Surabaya's challenges was attracting visitors from public schools to participate in field trips. To address this, KidZania Surabaya partnered with the government in marketing communications. One example was holding events with the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Mother and the Mayor's Wife. As a Key Opinion Leader, Bunda Paud invites kindergartens and early childhood education schools in Surabaya to come to KidZania Surabaya. Thus, KidZania Surabaya gains visitors through the invitation of Bunda Paud, who is trusted by consumers. Research by Yuliana (2020), shows that the use of Key Opinion Leaders can increase sales. However, Mochamad Syafruddin Aji said that KidZania for All did not have a significant impact on increasing the number of sales after the event concluded. Even so, KidZania is still sponsoring an event with Bunda Paud for the second time in the hope of gaining more trust from the people of Surabaya as a place for play and education.

KidZania Go's activities serve as a form of sponsorship for schools, bringing several role-playing activities to the schools. The selection of target schools is also tailored to KidZania Surabaya's target market. The target schools are identified as well-known schools with students who are deemed capable of purchasing KidZania Surabaya tickets. These activities also demonstrate KidZania's responsibility to its industry partners (IPs) by exposing its brand. Brand exposure for IPs is achieved through professional role-play activities and by allowing IPs to operate open booths.

Several KidZania Go activities also provide goodie bags containing merchandise and IP products to children, building experiences and increasing engagement with IPs and KidZania Surabaya. This also serves as a way for KidZania to remain in the minds of consumers. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), merchandise bearing a company brand or logo can increase brand visibility each time the brand is used by consumers. Through these experiences, KidZania Go also provides parents with an overview of the benefits and excitement of playing at KidZania Surabaya, thus encouraging them to purchase KidZania Surabaya tickets. KidZania Surabaya then capitalized on this opportunity by selling vouchers directly on-site. This initiative yielded immediate and significant results in sales and increased visitor numbers.

KidZania Surabaya also implemented a promotional strategy through joint programs with various companies, including promotions and events. By collaborating with partners, KidZania Surabaya minimized promotional costs by utilizing billboard spots and radio stations owned by the partners. Furthermore, both partners and KidZania Surabaya leveraged each other's available time, expanding their audience reach and ultimately leading to KidZania Surabaya ticket purchases.

One form of joint promotional collaboration was a voucher barter with Bank Mandiri. This collaboration offered a 25% discount for Mandiri cardholders. Furthermore, Bank Mandiri provided promotional opportunities for KidZania Surabaya by providing billboard spots, WhatsApp blasts, and a newsletter on its website. Mandiri was chosen as a partner based on its more flexible terms compared to other banks. Furthermore, the billboard spot was strategically located on Jalan HR. Muhammad, in front of the Surabaya Islamic Hospital, and at Juanda Airport Terminal 1.

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), advertising activities through print media, such as billboard spots, have a wide audience and can persuade audiences to take the desired action. In the Bank Mandiri billboard, the call to action directed people to immediately visit

the website and explore further information. The hope was that people would be interested and purchase tickets with the discount offered.

Meanwhile, the use of WhatsApp blasts can be read and responded to more quickly by consumers, thereby increasing product sales (Budiningrum et al., 2022). Furthermore, offering discounts can stimulate purchases, especially for new consumers, to try the product, thus increasing short-term sales (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, researchers found the joint promotion with Bank Mandiri to be ineffective. This was due to sales results not meeting targets.

In addition to Bank Mandiri, KidZania Surabaya also collaborated with Alana Hotel Malang as an event sponsor. Through this collaboration, KidZania supported Alana Hotel's events by providing vouchers and organizing a coloring contest. Meanwhile, Alana Hotel also provided accommodation vouchers for KidZania Surabaya's 2024 Chinese New Year and Eid al-Fitr events. This annual event featured a different concept than previous years. During this event, customers experienced plucking red envelopes from a Chinese New Year tree and received various prizes, including vouchers from Alana Hotel.

Alana Hotel also facilitated KidZania's advertising on its partner radio spots and billboards as promotional media. This activity expanded the promotional reach and attracted new customers from Alana Hotel Malang's existing customers. Print media advertising was also combined with social media usage on Instagram and TikTok. Furthermore, KidZania Surabaya utilized industry partner radio channels to further expand its message reach. This strategy successfully increased sales, and KidZania used the same strategy for the second time.

In addition to utilizing collaboration as a marketing communication strategy, KidZania Surabaya also employs various forms of marketing communication. One form of marketing communication implemented is telemarketing to increase sales of birthday party venues. Furthermore, telemarketing is also used to follow up with schools that have or haven't held field trips at KidZania. Research by Muyassharoh (2020) suggests that telemarketing can increase product purchases. However, Alif Nurwahyuni, a corporate and birthday sales staff member, stated that telemarketing is less effective because most people don't answer their phones.

The use of WhatsApp blasting also aims to support sales of venues and family packages. WhatsApp blasting allows for personal interaction and allows consumers to respond quickly to messages. KidZania Surabaya also uses WhatsApp blasting to share referral codes for event sales. Furthermore, school group sales staff regularly send group package promotions daily to their contacts.

The fierce competition in the tourism industry through online and social media has led KidZania to maximize its digital marketing communication activities. This implementation is evident in the use of the company website, Google Ads, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The website is used in digital marketing as a central information hub for KidZania. The KidZania Surabaya website contains Q&A information, various product information, prices, operating hours, current discounts, links to KidZania's social media channels, and a phone number for consumers to contact for further information. Furthermore, the KidZania website serves as a publication platform, connecting to online news portals from media partners and the company's magazine.

The website also aims to direct visitors to make reservations and purchase tickets online, thereby increasing sales. Therefore, KidZania Surabaya initiated a sales promotion by offering discounts to consumers who purchase tickets through the website. This sales promotion is also advertised through social media platforms directly connected to the website, facilitating online sales transactions. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), offering discounts is effective for increasing short-term sales and immediate purchases. By utilizing price promotions, KidZania also seeks to attract consumers to visit the website immediately, thereby increasing website traffic.

Increased website traffic can impact website SEO (Search Engine Optimization). SEO is a step taken to make a website easily recognized by search engines. Another way to increase website traffic is by leveraging discounts with easily searchable keywords to entice consumers to visit the website and make purchases. However, SEO on the KidZania Surabaya website isn't being utilized optimally. This is evident in the limited search engine results for the term "KidZania Surabaya."

KidZania Surabaya also utilizes various social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, for promotion and sales. Instagram is KidZania's primary social media platform. Instagram features are used to interact with other users, fostering customer engagement. Research by Sitorus (2023) revealed that increased engagement significantly impacts company sales.

KidZania utilizes Instagram content by creating interactive content, promotions, and reposting consumer stories. The content planning process for KidZania Surabaya's social media is based on the creation of an annual content calendar. Instagram, KidZania Surabaya's primary social media platform, is also used as a promotional tool for ticket sales and as a tool to expose industry partners monthly. This exposure activity involves creating interactive content containing incentives in the form of vouchers or discounts that attract visitors. In addition to leading to potential purchases, this content also encourages followers, likes, and comments, thereby increasing KidZania's Instagram engagement.

KidZania also uses Instagram Ads to promote its content by targeting specific audiences. Instagram Ads are integrated with Facebook Ads, allowing ads posted on Instagram to also appear on Facebook. According to Belch and Belch (2020), integrating advertising with different platforms can create more effective and efficient advertising campaigns.

As a means of stimulating ticket purchases and Instagram engagement, KidZania Surabaya also utilizes influencers to promote discounts and events. According to Gunawan et al. (2023), promotional strategies using influencers can positively contribute to product sales. KidZania Surabaya also consistently uses sales promotions in the form of giveaways to increase engagement and attract visitors. Erkan and Evans (2016) revealed that increasing engagement through excessive promotions tends to be unsustainable without a follow-up strategy. Likewise, sales promotions can have a temporary impact on sales.

Instagram posts are often reposted to other social media platforms, such as TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, indicating a lack of optimization on other social media platforms. According to Plessis (2017), content posted on social media must be tailored to the platform's characteristics, as customer interests and needs can vary depending on the platform. If content doesn't align with the target audience, it will likely be less engaging, resulting in decreased social media engagement.

Meanwhile, Instagram posts aren't posted daily. This is because posting content too frequently on Instagram can actually lead to decreased engagement and many viewers unfollowing. However, a study by Setiawan (2024) states that increasing posting frequency can increase social media engagement. Furthermore, the content created is based solely on a content calendar and does not utilize content pillars. Plessis (2017) explains that using content pillars is necessary to align with consumer interests and clarify the types of content that resonate with the audience. This will keep content focused on a single goal and increase visibility amidst the abundance of content on social media. A study by Cotter (2018) also explains that social media algorithms like TikTok and Instagram tend to prioritize trending content to appear on users' ForYPs. This automatically results in less engagement or visibility.

KidZania Surabaya does not use TikTok ads to distribute promotional content. TikTok content is also inconsistent or uploaded infrequently. Research by Arif (2023) shows that posting frequency on TikTok can increase the chances of content going viral and gaining greater audience attention. Furthermore, posting frequency can also maintain audience engagement and keep them following the content. However, Dewi Candra revealed that this had no impact on their TikTok follower count. KidZania Surabaya uses TikTok to upload sales promotion content. This step is also intended to maintain engagement on TikTok. This content generally consists of swipeable photos and uses trending hashtags and sounds, thus driving engagement and FYP opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and data analysis, KidZania Surabaya collaborates with partners from government and educational institutions to increase sales. These partnerships can assist school sales groups' personal selling approach to several schools and venue sales. Events and sponsorships involving educational and government institutions also contribute to ticket purchases and have an impact on increasing attendance, although not significantly.

KidZania's marketing communications activities are also supported by the use of direct marketing through telemarketing. Telemarketing is used to follow up with schools that have or have not yet hosted field trips at KidZania. Furthermore, KidZania Surabaya incorporates WhatsApp Blasting to disseminate sales promotions by sharing referral codes for event sales and group packages. Online and social media platforms, such as websites, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, are utilized as marketing communication strategies to compete with competitors. Online and social media platforms are generally used to stimulate consumer purchases through engagement and sales promotions. However, social media utilization is not optimal due to the limited focus on Instagram. Furthermore, KidZania's tendency to use sales promotions to increase engagement without a sustainable strategy can result in temporary increases in engagement.

After conducting the analysis and research, the researchers provided suggestions and input to KidZania Surabaya to maintain continuous collaboration with their partners. Furthermore, they suggested that KidZania Surabaya maximize its social media potential to increase engagement and maximize the potential for increased visitor numbers.

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