

Digital Marketing Public Relations Strategy of PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu in Optimizing Online Services

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly changed consumer behavior in shopping activities, especially in the retail industry. Companies are required to adapt by implementing digital marketing strategies to maintain competitiveness and improve service quality. This study aims to analyze the digital marketing public relations strategy implemented by PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu in optimizing online services. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The informants in this study consist of internal informants, namely the Human Resources Department (HRD), a Sales Associate who also serves as a content creator and social media administrator, and a Customer Service Officer. In addition, two online customers were involved as external informants. The results show that PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu has implemented digital marketing public relations strategies through several elements, including online advertising, website marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media, and email marketing. Among these elements, social media, online advertising, and SEO are the most dominant strategies used to promote products and improve online services. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp allow companies to reach more customers and facilitate direct interaction with them. Therefore, the implementation of digital marketing public relations strategies plays an important role in improving online services and strengthening customer relationships.

Keywords

Digital Marketing, Public Relations Strategy, Online Services, Social Media Marketing, Retail Industry

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including economic activities and business operations. The integration of digital platforms into business practices has created new opportunities for companies to communicate with customers, promote products, and deliver services more efficiently. In recent years, the growth of internet usage and mobile technology has encouraged companies to adopt digital marketing strategies in order to remain competitive in the increasingly dynamic market environment (Anjani, 2024). Digital technology enables businesses to reach a wider audience, build stronger relationships with customers, and improve the effectiveness of marketing communication. One of the sectors that has experienced significant changes due to digital transformation is the retail industry. Retail businesses traditionally rely on physical stores to sell products directly to consumers. However, the emergence of digital platforms and e-commerce has shifted consumer purchasing behavior from offline shopping to online shopping. Consumers today tend to seek convenience, efficiency, and accessibility when purchasing products. The availability of online shopping platforms allows

customers to access product information, compare prices, and conduct transactions without visiting physical stores (Frahianti et al., 2024). As a result, retail companies are increasingly required to integrate online services with their traditional retail operations.

In Indonesia, the retail industry has experienced rapid growth as well as intense competition. According to DataIndonesia.id (2022), the number of retail businesses in Indonesia has reached approximately 3.98 million units, including both online and offline retailers. Although this growth indicates the expansion of the retail sector, it also creates greater competition among businesses. Many retail companies are forced to innovate and adapt to the digital era in order to maintain their market position. Several retail stores have even experienced closure due to their inability to respond to technological developments and changes in consumer behavior. PT. Matahari Department Store is one of the largest retail companies in Indonesia that offers various products such as fashion, accessories, cosmetics, and household goods at affordable prices. The company has a long history in the Indonesian retail industry and has established numerous branches across the country, including PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu. Since its establishment in Bengkulu around 2010, the company has served customers through physical retail stores located in Bengkulu Indah Mall. However, similar to other retail companies, PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu has also faced challenges due to changes in consumer behavior, particularly with the increasing preference for online shopping.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the shift toward digital consumption. During this period, many consumers began to rely heavily on digital platforms to fulfill their daily needs, including purchasing fashion products and household items. This situation encouraged PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu to develop online services in order to maintain customer engagement and ensure business continuity. One of the initiatives implemented by the company is the *Shop and Talk* service through WhatsApp, which allows customers to interact directly with sales associates, ask about product availability, and make purchases without visiting the physical store. In addition, the company has also utilized social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to promote products and communicate with customers. Despite these efforts, the implementation of online services at PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu is still considered not fully optimal. Several challenges remain in the management of digital platforms, including limited interaction with customers, inconsistent responses to customer inquiries, and insufficient product information provided through online channels. In addition, the company's social media presence still has relatively limited followers compared to other fashion retailers in Bengkulu, which indicates that the digital marketing strategy has not yet been maximized. These conditions may reduce customer satisfaction and limit the potential growth of online sales.

To address these challenges, companies need to implement effective digital marketing public relations strategies. Digital marketing public relations refers to the integration of public relations activities with digital marketing tools in order to communicate with audiences, promote products, and maintain a positive corporate image. This approach allows companies to interact with customers through various digital channels while simultaneously strengthening brand reputation and customer trust (Nurislamiah et al., 2023). According to Kotler and Keller (2022), digital marketing strategies can be implemented through several important elements, including online advertising, website marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and email marketing. These strategies enable companies to expand their market reach, improve

communication with customers, and enhance service quality through digital platforms. In the context of retail businesses, the implementation of these strategies can help companies optimize online services and provide better shopping experiences for customers. Based on the background described above, this study aims to analyze the digital marketing public relations strategy implemented by PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu in optimizing online services. This research is expected to provide insights into how digital marketing public relations strategies can improve the effectiveness of online services, strengthen relationships between companies and customers, and support the sustainability of retail businesses in the digital era.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the digital marketing public relations strategy implemented by PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu in optimizing its online services. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore and understand social phenomena in depth based on the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in a particular context (Creswell, 2023). Through this approach, the researcher was able to obtain detailed information about how digital marketing public relations strategies are implemented within the company and how these strategies contribute to improving online services.

The research was conducted at PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu, which is located at Bengkulu Indah Mall, Jl. Putri Gading Cempaka, Penurunan, Ratu Samban District, Bengkulu City, Indonesia. The data collection process took place from January 28 to February 28, 2026. The informants in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a method of selecting participants based on specific considerations related to the research objectives, allowing researchers to choose individuals who have relevant knowledge and experience regarding the research topic (Sugiyono, 2023). A total of five informants participated in this study, consisting of three internal informants and two external informants. The internal informants included a Human Resources Department (HRD) officer responsible for determining digital marketing strategies, a Sales Associate who also acts as a content creator and social media administrator, and a Customer Service Officer who assists in managing communication with customers through online platforms. The external informants consisted of two customers who had experience using the online services provided by PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu.

Data in this study were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted using a non-participant observation approach in which the researcher directly observed the digital marketing activities carried out by the company, including the management of social media platforms, the use of WhatsApp for customer communication, and the publication of promotional content through digital media. In-depth interviews were conducted with the selected informants in order to obtain detailed information about the implementation of digital marketing public relations strategies and the effectiveness of online services provided by the company. Documentation was also used to support the data obtained from observations and interviews. The documentation included screenshots of social media content, promotional materials, and other relevant documents related to the company's digital marketing activities.

The data collected from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed using

qualitative data analysis techniques. The analysis process consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying the raw data obtained during the research process by focusing on information relevant to the research objectives. After the data were reduced, the data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives to make the information easier to understand and interpret. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying the findings by comparing data from different sources in order to ensure the credibility and validity of the research results.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study describe the implementation of digital marketing public relations strategies carried out by PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu in optimizing online services. The findings were obtained through observations, interviews with internal and external informants, and documentation related to the company's digital marketing activities. The analysis is based on the digital marketing strategy framework proposed by Kotler and Keller (2022), which includes online advertising, website marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and email marketing. The first finding shows that PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu has implemented online advertising as one of the main promotional strategies. Online advertising is conducted through social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok by creating promotional content that highlights fashion products, discount programs, and seasonal promotions. The company's digital marketing team regularly produces visual content, including short videos and promotional images, that follow current social media trends in order to attract the attention of potential customers. These advertisements are designed to provide information about ongoing promotions and encourage customers to use the company's online services.

The second finding indicates that website marketing is used as a supporting platform for providing information about the company and its products. The official website of Matahari Department Store contains product catalogs, company profiles, and promotional information. However, the research findings reveal that the website is not frequently updated or actively used by the Bengkulu branch for promotional purposes. Most promotional activities are instead conducted through social media platforms, which are considered more effective in reaching customers.

The third finding relates to the implementation of search engine optimization (SEO). The company applies SEO strategies mainly through the use of keywords and hashtags in social media content. Keywords related to product categories, brand names, and the company's location are included in captions and promotional descriptions to make the content easier to find through search engines and social media searches. The use of hashtags also helps increase the visibility of promotional posts and allows customers to find product information more easily when searching online. The fourth finding shows that social media plays the most dominant role in the company's digital marketing public relations strategy. PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu actively uses social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok to communicate with customers and promote products. Instagram is used to publish promotional content, product information, and promotional videos that attract customer attention. WhatsApp is utilized as a communication and transaction platform through the "Shop and Talk" service, which allows customers to interact

directly with sales associates. Through this service, customers can ask about product availability, request product images, and make purchases online.

The final finding indicates that email marketing is still used as part of the company's digital communication strategy, although its use is relatively limited. Email marketing is mainly used to send promotional information and customer satisfaction surveys to registered customers or members of the Matahari loyalty program. The email communication system is primarily managed by the central office of Matahari Department Store, while the Bengkulu branch relies more on social media platforms for marketing communication and online service management. Overall, the results show that PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu has implemented several digital marketing public relations strategies to support the optimization of online services. Among the strategies implemented, social media marketing, online advertising, and search engine optimization are the most actively used tools for promoting products and interacting with customers in the digital environment.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that digital marketing public relations strategies play an important role in supporting the optimization of online services at PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu. The implementation of several digital marketing elements, including online advertising, website marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and email marketing, demonstrates the company's effort to adapt to the rapid development of digital technology and changing consumer behavior. In the digital era, consumers increasingly rely on online platforms to obtain product information and conduct purchasing transactions. Therefore, companies must adopt digital marketing strategies that enable them to communicate effectively with customers and expand their market reach (Anjani, 2024). The use of online advertising by PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu shows that visual promotional content plays an important role in attracting customer attention. The company creates promotional advertisements through social media platforms using short videos and visual images that follow current trends. This approach aligns with previous studies which state that digital advertising that incorporates creative and trend-based content can significantly increase audience engagement and influence consumer purchasing behavior (Genoveva, 2022). By presenting promotional content that is visually appealing and relevant to consumer interests, the company is able to increase the effectiveness of its promotional communication and encourage customers to explore available online services.

The findings also reveal that the role of the website in the company's digital marketing strategy is relatively limited compared to other digital platforms. Although the official website provides product catalogs and company information, most promotional activities are conducted through social media platforms. This condition suggests that customers tend to prefer faster and more interactive platforms for obtaining information about products and promotions. Nevertheless, the presence of a website still contributes to strengthening the company's credibility because customers can access official information about the brand and its products. According to Yanto and Rusda (2022), websites serve as an important tool in building customer trust and providing reliable information about a company's products and services. Search engine optimization (SEO) also plays a role in improving the visibility of the company's digital content.

The use of keywords and hashtags in social media posts helps increase the likelihood that customers will find the company's promotional content through online searches. This strategy is consistent with the concept of SEO, which aims to improve the accessibility of digital content so that it appears more prominently in search engine results (Purnomo et al., 2022). By optimizing digital content using relevant keywords, PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu is able to increase traffic to its online platforms and facilitate customer access to product information.

Among all digital marketing strategies implemented by the company, social media marketing appears to be the most dominant and effective strategy in optimizing online services. Social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok provide opportunities for companies to communicate directly with customers and deliver promotional information in real time. Instagram functions as a promotional platform where the company shares product images, promotional videos, and discount information, while WhatsApp is used as a communication channel through the "Shop and Talk" service. Through this service, customers can interact directly with sales associates, ask about product availability, and complete purchasing transactions without visiting the physical store. This form of interaction reflects the characteristics of modern digital marketing, where companies can build closer relationships with customers through direct communication and personalized services. The use of social media platforms also allows the company to reach a wider audience beyond the geographical limitations of physical stores. Social media enables the dissemination of promotional information quickly and efficiently to potential customers from various locations. Previous studies have shown that social media marketing is one of the most effective digital marketing tools because it facilitates interactive communication and increases customer engagement (Murtiariyati et al., 2022). Therefore, the active use of social media platforms by PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu contributes significantly to the improvement of online services and customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, the role of email marketing in the company's digital marketing strategy is relatively limited. Email communication is mainly used to distribute promotional information and customer satisfaction surveys to registered members. Although email marketing has the potential to build long-term relationships with customers, its effectiveness depends on the quality of the customer database and the relevance of the information delivered. In the case of PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu, social media platforms are considered more effective for real-time communication and direct interaction with customers.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the integration of various digital marketing public relations strategies can support the optimization of online services in retail businesses. However, among the five strategies analyzed in this study, social media marketing, online advertising, and search engine optimization are the most influential elements in attracting customers and increasing online engagement. The effective implementation of these strategies enables PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu to strengthen its communication with customers, improve service quality, and enhance its competitiveness in the digital retail industry.

Conclusion

This study concludes that PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu has implemented several digital marketing public relations strategies in order to optimize its online services. These

strategies include online advertising, website marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and email marketing. The implementation of these strategies reflects the company's efforts to adapt to the rapid development of digital technology and changes in consumer behavior, particularly the increasing preference for online shopping and digital communication.

Among the strategies applied, social media marketing, online advertising, and search engine optimization are the most dominant and effective elements in supporting online services. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp play a crucial role in promoting products, delivering promotional information, and facilitating direct communication between the company and customers. The "Shop and Talk" service through WhatsApp allows customers to interact with sales associates, obtain product information, and complete purchasing transactions more easily without visiting the physical store. In addition, online advertising through creative and trend-based content helps attract customer attention and increase engagement with the company's digital platforms.

Although website marketing and email marketing are still utilized, their roles are relatively limited compared to social media platforms. The website mainly serves as a source of company information and product catalogs, while email marketing is used primarily for promotional broadcasts and customer satisfaction surveys. Therefore, further optimization of these platforms could improve the effectiveness of the company's digital marketing strategy in the future.

Overall, the implementation of digital marketing public relations strategies has contributed to improving online services, strengthening communication with customers, and supporting the competitiveness of PT. Matahari Department Store Bengkulu in the digital retail environment.

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