

“WORD OF MOUTH” IN ONLINE MARKETING COMMUNICATION TO IMPROVE SALES FOR THE HOSPITALITY BUSINESS INDUSTRY THROUGH PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

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Providers

A business is a company that conducts commercial, industrial, or professional operations. Businesses may be for-profit or non-profit organizations. Sole proprietorships, corporations, partnerships, and limited liability companies are the four forms of businesses that exist. To achieve great customer satisfaction, any of these sorts of enterprises in hospitality required two-way interactions involving the consumer and service provider. If the service provider fails to supply a service, the hospitality business's viability will suffer. Communication in hospitality could be challenging. Communication itself in hospitality could be delivered verbally or non-verbally depending on the present event. This study uses a qualitative approach using textual analysis for data collection. Furthermore, the study also involves analyzing location, observing company interviews, and documentation based on current events on management's communications in an ongoing situation. This research aims to pinpoint the online marketing communication that is used to improve sales in the hospitality business through personal engagement

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector is one of many that are leading globally; the demand for the hospitality industry is determined by the number of people on the planet. Some hospitality businesses are revolving around basic human necessities, such as restaurants or places to stay (hotels, motels, and so on) (Siahaan, 2019). Other hospitality enterprises catering to secondary human needs include massage, cleaning services, and so on. Over time, the growth of the hotel industry has been proportional to global advancements and movements to suit human wants and desires. Because culture and hospitality industries have changed, humans may use this service to interact, enjoy socializing, self-healing, and create some material for social media. “How does the hospitality business attract a potential customer?” is the main key to surviving in the hospitality business in this very dynamic world movement. Using communication and online media we speak the unspoken words to potential customers (GUPTA, 2020).

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Figure 1 Datareportal.com

Most hospitality business customers are Internet users, based on Figure 1.1 204.7 Million people in Indonesia are Internet users compared to the total population, which means there are 73.7% of chance that hospitality business management may speak to approach potential customers thru any online media. However, there is also a potential as well that we can still approach the rest of the 26.3% that did not use the Internet (Latifah, 2018). Thus, this study will coherently discuss the hospitality business by demonstrating how to communicate and deliver our message without saying a single word via social media, as well as the strategy itself for hospitality management based on data collected, filtered, and presented to explain the study objective. Furthermore, the process by which "Unspoken Words" was completely altered and adjusted to meet the needs of any hospitality business will be presented. According to Belch and (Belch et al., 2004), word-of-mouth (WOM) communication involves individuals sharing information with other individuals in a verbal or written form about a product, service, or company.

The hospitality industry can improve its sales and profitability by providing a positive experience to customers and encouraging them to share their experiences with others. Electronic word-of-mouth communication is effective in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward a product, service, or brand. It has the potential to increase sales and revenue for the hospitality business industry, (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In addition, the way hospitality businesses run has to accordance with the modernization and ongoing culture that change the market itself, this study focuses on discussing the condition that happens after the pandemic, which is Covid-19, Indonesia is the fourth in the world with the highest population rate in the world, and this study chooses Surabaya as the second highest population in the country as the barometer.

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Figure 2 Essential Digital Headlines (datareportal.com)

Of 277.7 million people in Indonesia, 204.7 million are internet users with at least 1 cellular mobile connection, data stated 370.1 million have a connection to reach out internet world, those data stated that at least 1 person has 1 or more devices to connect themselves into digital networking, and 191.4 of them are actively using social media. Sigala, Christou, and Gretzel (Arviani, 2022) highlight the importance of social media and user-generated content, including online reviews, in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry. They suggest that online reviews can influence the purchase decisions of potential customers, leading to increased sales and revenue for businesses in the industry.

METHOD

Qualitative research methods are ideal for use in the cafe and restaurant industry because they can capture factors that are difficult to quantify numerically, such as customer-employee interaction. This strategy seeks to understand a phenomenon from a deep and comprehensive standpoint by collecting and analyzing data in the form of text, photos, or audio, as stated (Sugiyono, 2017). Data was collected from observation and taken from time to time. This research will obtain current data directly from the reallocation with local time use. Interviews and documentation were also conducted to match the reality. This study uses observation thru online and offline from a hospitality business, interviews with the owner and customer, and documentation to collect data to be analyzed and discussed. Observation is the activity of observing and recording phenomena that are directly observed. Observation is a process of paying close attention to objects so that they can be studied and get the needed data. The use of qualitative methods through observation can provide a better understanding of consumer preferences and habits in the cafe and restaurant business in the hospitality industry. In this study, observations are focused on the activities of the hospitality business management and marketing team for the social

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media and Google review in a real-time situation. As the study is focused on Indonesia to obtain legitimate current situation data, this data is taken from 10 hospitality businesses located in Balikpapan, Surabaya, Jakarta, Bekasi, Tangerang, Bali, Semarang, which some of the locations having 2-3 hospitality businesses that those are focuses in Food and Beverages industry that conduct in similar areas of business.

This observation is carried out directly on the inner activities and outside of the good impact of the hotel industry. At this stage, the observation focuses on how the inside management operations work to have a positive marketing impact, and it returns to management for guidance on how to handle the situation. The method of observation will be carried out by watching buyers' comments based on interviews, social media, Google reviews, and guest comments. The observation will take place and will be used to create learning materials for management and marketing in the hospitality industry. According to (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) Qualitative research method is an inquiry approach used to gain an in-depth understanding of complex human phenomena by collecting and analyzing non-numerical data in the form of text, images, or audio recordings. In this study, direct interviews are conducted one-on-one between interviewees and interviewers, with questions expressed directly to the respondents. This data collection expects to gather a piece of current information with the ongoing recent action. The author will gather information from one owner and two managers who oversaw a seven-day shift with multiple working shifts. Ten customers at random from each hospitality business. (Doody & Bailey, 2016) stated that the qualitative research method is an inquiry process of understanding and interpreting complex human phenomena. This strategy seeks to understand a phenomenon from a deep and comprehensive standpoint by collecting and analyzing data in the form of text, photos, or audio.

The final step in this study is documentation, which has been done to get final data to be gathered by taking a note so that it would be one conclusion and result based on current occurrences directly by the topic concerned. Following completion of all three steps, a classification based on the subject will be discussed to analyze all of the data. According to Supriyati (2011), one of many ways to collect research data with a naturalistic nature that goes deep into natural context, the perpetrator participates naturally in interaction. The process of this study will open up an opportunity for other information that created a closer result to the actual situation. As well as, marketing research is a critical tool for gathering insights about the target audience, identifying their needs and preferences, and developing effective marketing communication strategies that resonate with them, McDaniel & Gates (2017). Categorization is also needed to shorten and deducted unimportant data to reduce data repetition as well, or as known as reduction. Reduction is a process of sorting irregular data into more regular chunks by coding, arranging them into categories, and summarizing them into simple patterns and arrangements.

Data presentation is the final step in displaying data that has been processed through all of the preceding steps. Data presentation will assist researchers in effectively recognizing data as well as the presence of inaccurate information that prevents the author from displaying valid data so that the data presentation process is carried out to produce a final clear conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There is always a transition in how management and marketing work from generation to generation, and marketing strategy itself needs to approach a potential customer from a general level of approaching, to a personal level of approaching, a hospitality business has to reorganize

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and adapt to exist and survive in current conditions, effective restaurant management and marketing that considers from a customer point of view will sign The goal of this research is to uncover restaurant management and marketing development to adapt to modernization and attract gen-z and millennials for hospitality business continuation.

Word-of-mouth marketing is a theory that developed from a customer's personal great experience with the service, goods, or anything that the customer brought and met their expectations, and needs, and giving the customer the highest satisfaction, so the customer will talk about it and recommend it to their connections who may have a similar interest, problem, or correlations. The goal of this research is to figure out how to incorporate word-of-mouth marketing into an online digital platform. As a result, the hospitality industry must adjust its operational management and marketing, which will be clearly stated based on the collected data from the observation, interview, and documentation processes.

Google review and customer feedback for hospitality businesses

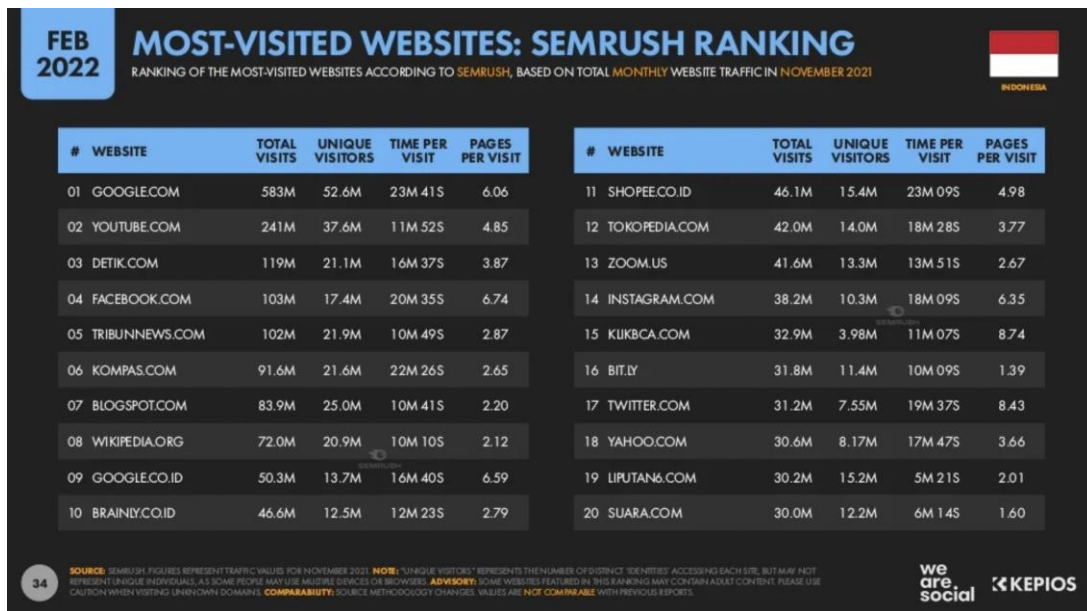


Figure 3 Most-visited website: Semrush Ranking (datareportal.com)

According to Figure 3, the most-visited website is Google. Google is a search engine that has been in operation since 1998, and it has had a significant impact on everything, including the hospitality industry. Nowadays, Google has stretched its wings to become a search engine that asks people for help in updating every single change across the world, including Google Maps, Google Reviews, Google Feedback, and Google Report, which are most commonly utilized by the hospitality sector field.

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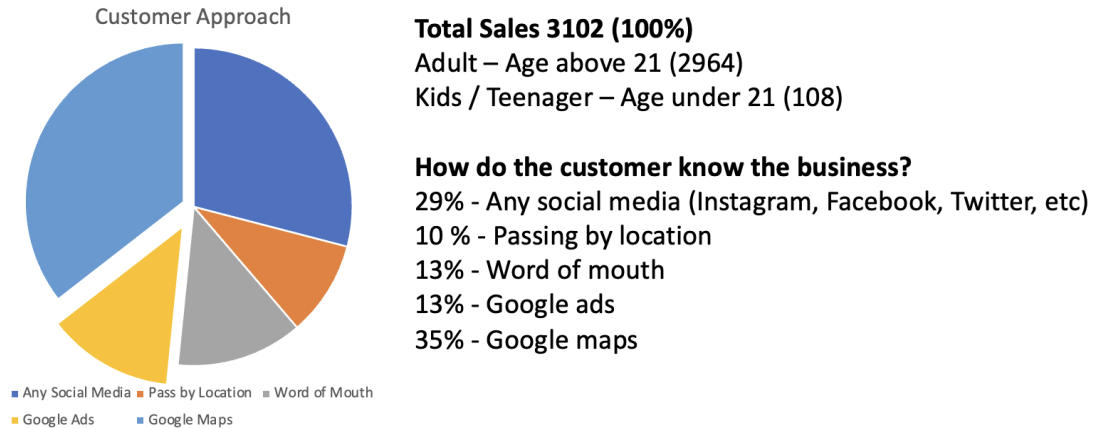


Figure 4 Taken from one of the hospitality businesses in Surabaya

According to Figure 4, 23% of combined customers recognize and opt to pay for a visit to the hospitality business when passing by or hearing about it through customer relatives. On the other hand, 77% of customers who paid for a visit knew the location of the hospitality business from 29% of social media, 13% of Google ads, and 35% from google maps (Google Review) before the potential customer went to the hospitality business physical location.

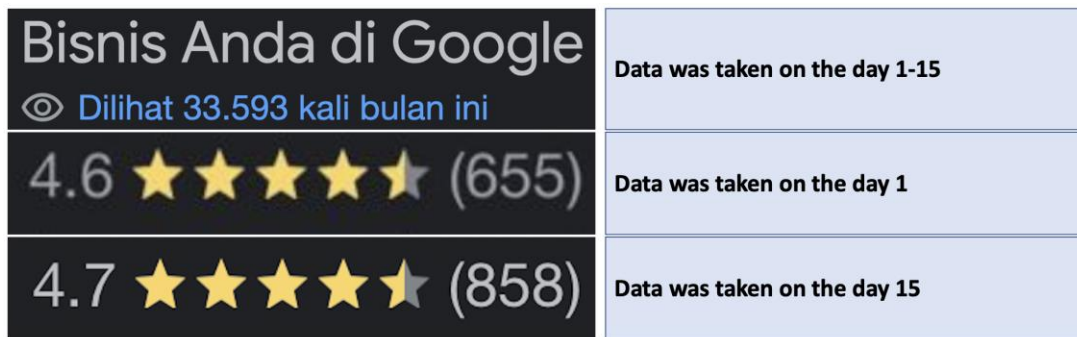


Figure 5, Taken from a Google review from one of the hospitality businesses as same business as Figure 4

Figure 5 explains that the hospitality business had 655 reviews and 2 average stars point that the hospitality obtained for 10 months, averaging approximately 3500 views per month, by implementing this study, hospitality business management push the employee with various ways to gain more Google reviews, during the time it took 15 business days to obtain 203 reviews with all five stars reviews, and 4.7 average stars point, when compared to 10 months ago, management pushed the employee with various ways to gain more google reviews, during the time it took 15 business According to Park and Nicolau (2015) suggest that online customer reviews can influence potential guests' purchasing decisions by providing social validation and acting as an information source.

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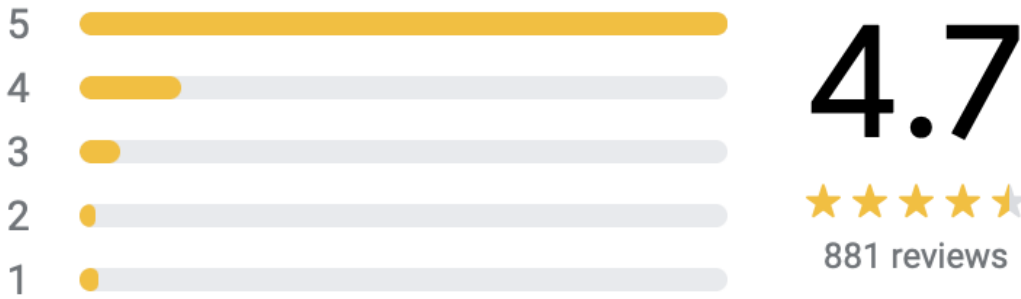


Figure 6 Taken from Google review from one of the hospitality businesses same business as Figure 4

Figure 4.1.4 is a rating that shows how many stars are mainly given from the customer to the business, one star to five stars are typically based on the customer's personal opinion, which somehow leads to their perspective, that is why personal customer engagement is so essential to any hospitality business, as much as it will affect the customer assessment for hospitality business google reviews. Kotler and Keller (2016) define, word of mouth marketing as the process of encouraging satisfied customers to talk about a firm and its products and services to others in their social network". While management has to focus on human resources and training for customer engagement, the marketing team has to focus on how to spread great and positive ratings that came from the customer to attract more attention on the internet and social platform.

Improving Google review to create an impact on hospitality business location

Improving could be in any possibilities, improving is a process that increases old ways to do it with development to adjust to how the environment works. Restaurant management needs to be adaptive as well to catch up with the development process, this are involving a decision-making process whose role play is placing a very important in the hospitality business industry to maximize the potential.

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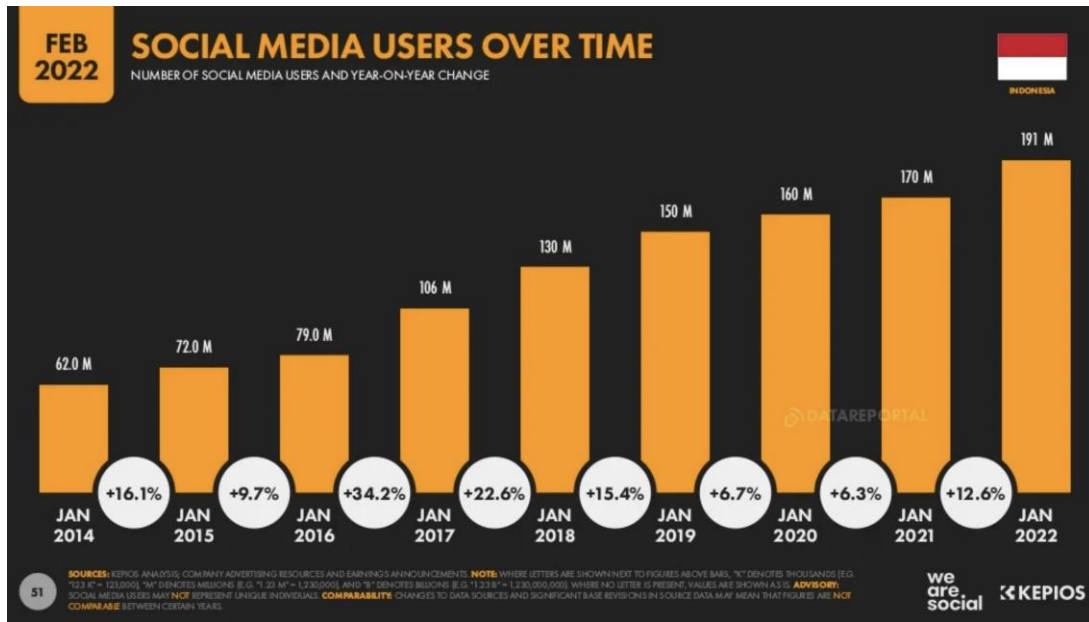


Figure 7 Social media users overtime (datareportal.com)

Figure 7 shows that for the past 6 years, there is always an increase every year at the beginning of the year. At the beginning of 2014, there are only 62 Millions Indonesian using social media, and over the next 8 years, the number increased to 191 Million which is equal to triple compared to January 2014. As researchers see and analyzed there is a great potential that might occur due to the increasing use of social media and the internet. Google & Google Review is one of many platforms that are connected to social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Gojek, Grab, Waze, and many more. Social media might be an effective tool to accelerate the word of mouth marketing in the hospitality industry, especially through customer reviews and local recommendations from other users. Social media refers to websites and applications that allow users to create and share content or to participate in social networking, Buhalis and Law (2019) discussed the importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the hospitality industry. They argued that businesses that do not adopt ICTs, including social media and online marketing communication, will be left behind as younger generations increasingly rely on digital channels for travel and hospitality information. This research will stimulate the mindset of the management team and optimize the marketing strategy to reach maximum potential by inviting celebrity endorsers who are locally well-known and have a good reputation may increase/strengthen the brand image and build positive word of mouth in the hospitality industry. The recommendation is a must! According to Gartner (2013), cafe recommendation is the act of suggesting or advising a particular cafe or coffee shop to someone else based on one's own experience and judgment.



Figure 8 Process to Improve Google Review

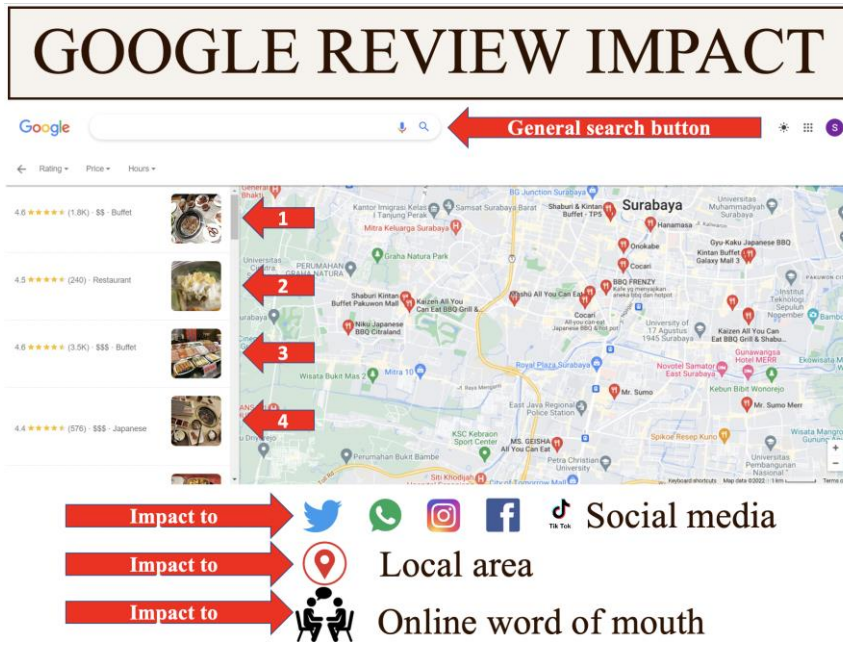


Figure 8 Google review impact

The purpose of this process is how to improve Google Review as online marketing in active and passive ways. According to (Doody & Bailey, 2016), service restoration can help improve customer experience and increase the likelihood of recommendations to others. This is especially important for the hospitality industry, where customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth recommendations can greatly impact business success. Figure 8 is a process on how to embrace

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an employee to have a customer engagement to hospitality business customer, researcher gives three possibilities that might occur during the process, the customer will give a positive review, a negative review, or neutral offline feedback, the main goal is how to create a positive review from a negative review and neutral offline feedback to become a positive review so it will increase and affect the google hospitality business in google search engine, Figure 8, those process will take times and a lot of repetition. Once the hospitality business becomes the top 10 in the local region area, it will create a passive impact and generate larger and bigger advertising in online media. Google browser users will always search on general basis information, then Google will show any potential specification that users may need, if a users search for “all you can eat restaurant” in the search engine button, it will be shown as similar to Figure 8, which Google will suggest based on google most review, star level, and closer distance from where the user stands in actual time. The goal of this process is to switch from conservative word-of-mouth marketing to an updated version of online-based word-of-mouth marketing. It also focuses on how to appropriately take care of the customer on personal relation basis, the goal also drives a business owner to put awareness into something that is going to give a great impact in the long-run period, especially on social media and internet-based marketing. In the end, hospitality business management will learn how to optimize human resources to stick with a monthly budget for marketing.

By focusing on a personal approach and personal customer engagement process hospitality businesses aim to obtain great feedback that might bring benefit and interests from individuals, industry, and society, thru social media that is integrated with the Google review platform. Figure 8 is a repetitive process to aim only one main outcome which is “Five Stars review on Google that will generate positive comments for word of mouth in an online marketing communication to improve sales and customer approach for the hospitality business industry. user-generated content is a critical factor in the travel information search process. By leveraging the power of user-generated content, such as online reviews and social media, marketers in the hospitality industry can generate a high volume of positive word-of-mouth, which can lead to increased sales and revenue.

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Outcome and how to implement it on social media



Figure 9 Customer comment from after Personal Customer Engagement

Based on the observation and the interview from each customer based on their experience from one hospitality business, there are five main topics that customers always consider, Food and beverages, speed of service, service friendliness, social media responsiveness, and recognition. Understanding the main point of customer engagement is essential, without it, hospitality management will never know from the customer's point of view, what the customer wants so the management team might deliver as the customer requests. From the hospitality business itself, Increasing the quality of service and food is important and it is required that an employee be able to perform a new skill that requires empathy, so it going to be helpful to the customer's point of view. Brassington & Pettitt (2017) stated that online marketing communication allows businesses to reach a wider audience and engage with their customers on a more personal level, creating a stronger brand image and enhancing customer loyalty. The hospitality business industry must be very attractive and creative to deliver every single personal customer need and interest so the

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customer may experience great service before, during, and after going to the hospitality business industry.

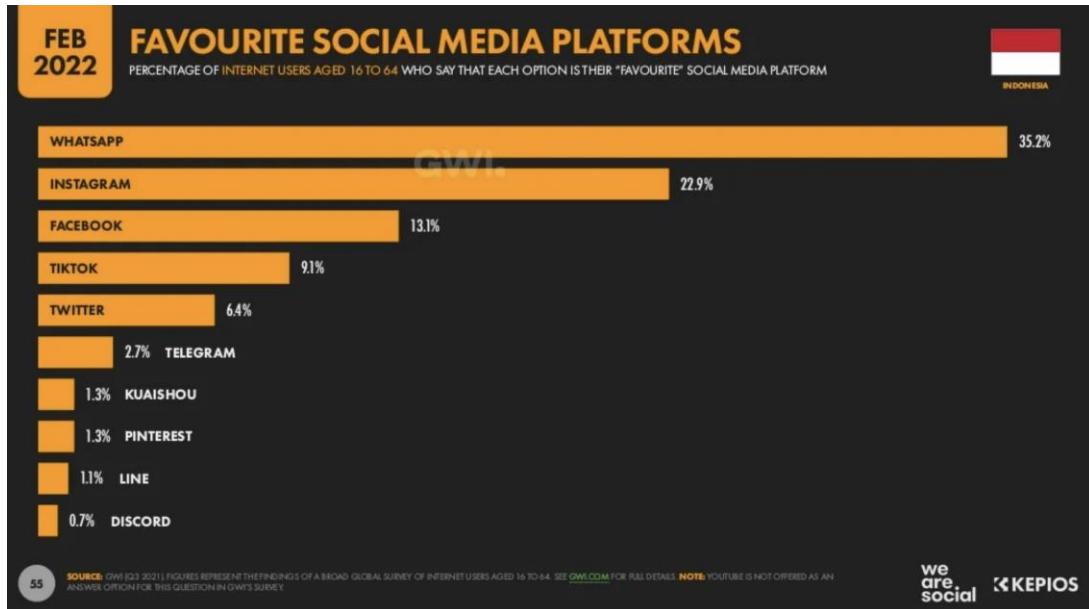


Figure 10. Favorite social media platforms (datareportal.com)

According to an interview and observation from all hospitality industry obtained in this research, all hospitality business has five main social media to approach potential customers, which from all five of those are under and integrated with the Google platform, so when Google reviews a hospitality business overcome the competitor, it will automatically gain an impact to gain a follower and draw attention from the social media as well. Pulizzi mentions that content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action, it is a tool to disseminate and spread information according from positive feedback and real situation, a commitment to advertise a hospitality business might as well get calculated first before management fully commits because advertising will expand the existing facts either is negative or negative.

Customer personal approach and appreciation

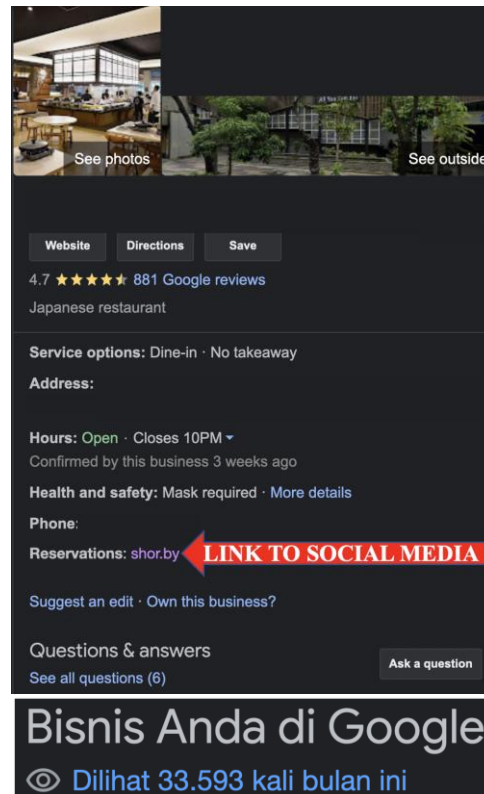


Figure 11 Google hospitality business

Figure 11 is an example of how to get approached right after the advertising went up, in 15 days 33.593 viewers saw the same page over and over, so the management team of the hospitality business industry has to make sure that all information above is based on facts, hospitality business has to be prepared for potential possibilities that might happen from a customer point of view. In conclusion, it is way much better if hospitality business share their social media and any links to connect and communicate with a potential customer the Google business, the customer will use all the information shown to generate all information needed before the potential customer decides to try it out what the hospitality business offers, and how the former customer experienced about it, on the other hand after potential customer decide to get connected, it will create an opportunity of customer engagement at the first by using social media to communicate in between hospitality business management and potential customers.

According to Kotler (2012) In the era of Marketing 3.0, companies need to focus on creating sustainable and socially responsible products and services that appeal to the customers' emotions and values. This means every single move needs to be adjusted based on the customer's needs and expectations, these images should be presented in an online marketing campaign so the word-of-mouth marketing may perform from the customer's point of view, not focusing on promotional planning. As mentioned by Grönroos (2017) defines marketing as “the management process that identifies, anticipates, and satisfies customer requirements profitably. It is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to

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create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives”. To increase sales, in this research one of the most influencing criteria to increase word of mouth In online marketing is pay to an advertisement that the online platform offer, which includes how much impact will be given by the social media and can be adjusted according to hospitality business need, by maintaining the whole process in online marketing communication hospitality business might increase the sales through word of mouth and online support. Not only that, Chaffey & Smith (2017) said that online marketing, also known as internet marketing or digital marketing, refers to the promotion of products or services through various online channels such as search engines, social media, email, and websites.

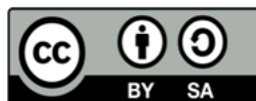
CONCLUSION

The hospitality business industry has a high demand that must be met by many business owners; as a result, the hospitality business is believed to be fast increasing, particularly the hospitality industry that sells food and beverages. Modernization has changed our culture and our behavior; the way potential customers obtain information is also impacted by online information that passes through social media marketing. Because of the data offered, internet users and browsers are becoming more selective in receiving data and sorting critical information that they only want to hear, and some of the information is misleading potential customers. Business owners seek to improve sales and get potential customer trust by emerging and increasing their potential viewers on social media. There is an improvement in hospitality businesses that share their social media and any links to connect and communicate between potential customers to the Google business, it will make it easier for the potential customer to approach some information before making any decision and trying out what the business offer, online tools and platforms that allow users to create, share, and interact with content and with each other, According to Okumus, Altınay, & Chathoth, (2016), Online platforms, such as Google, allow potential customers to access a wealth of information about a hotel, including its location, ratings, and reviews.

To increase and improve the existence of the hospitality business, the business owner can pay for an advertisement that the online platform provides, which will show the results and have an impact on social media. By maintaining the entire process in online marketing communication, there is a chance that it will increase sales through word of mouth and word of mouth from the online platform as well. In this case, "Word of Mouth" in online marketing communication can be started from the real customer that comes to the physical location in the hospitality industry, personal engagement is the main process to embrace an employee to have customer engagement in the hospitality business customer, there are possibilities that the customer might give to the business, positive, neutral, or negative. The major purpose of this method is to figure out how to get a favorable review through customer involvement so that the customer review has a positive impact on the Google search engine for hospitality businesses. Guffey and Loewy (2013) define business communication as the interchange of information, ideas, and opinions within an organization or between an organization and its external stakeholders. Good communication can help to establish customer connections and build trust, which can lead to positive word of mouth. Those processes will determine whether or not word of mouth in Internet marketing works; it is dependent on consumer interaction, which affects the hotel business's online credentials.

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